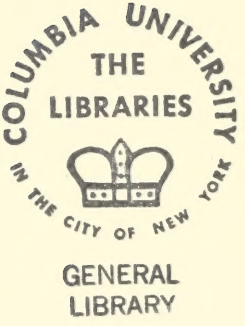

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EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND PAGANISM

S. CECILIA AND VALERIAN HER HUSBAND.

Martyrs – circa A D. 177-180. From an ancient Mosaic, traditionally restored by Pope Paschal I., A.D. 822.

EARLY CHRISTIANITY

AND

PAGANISM

A.D. 64 TO THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

A NARRATION MAINLY BASED UPON CONTEMPORARY RECORDS AND REMAINS

BY

H. DONALD M. SPENCE, D.D.

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER

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To the Dear Memory of Victoria, R.I., is dedicated this chronicle describing the building up of the strong foundation storeys of the faith, of which for sixty-four eventful years the great English Queen was the illustrious and pious Defender.

His Majesty the King of England has graciously approved this Dedication, which the late Queen of glorious memory accepted only a few days before she fell asleep.

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EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND PAGANISM.

INTRODUCTION.

IT has been justly said that "if ever there was a manifestation of the Supernatural, it was in the condition of things out of which arose the New Testament. We have only to take up the Epistles of S. Paul, and we find him surrounded, penetrated, permeated with the Supernatural. It is as it were the very atmosphere which he breathes. He does not assert it, he had no need to assert it."*

No thoughtful Christian scholar would be prepared to question this statement. It is, however, generally assumed that as the men who had been personally associated with the Divine Founder of Christianity passed away, open manifestations of the Supernatural became rarer and rarer until they ceased altogether. After the last years of the first century, a date usually given for the death of S. John, the last survivor of the Apostolic band, few, if any, authentic instances of that open manifestation can be adduced. But the story of the rise and progress of Christianity during the 280 years which elapsed between the Ascension morning, in A.D. 33, and the Peace of the Church secured by the famous Edict of Constantine in A.D. 313, may be emphatically looked upon as the story of a period on the whole permeated with the Supernatural.

Outward manifestations of the Supernatural no doubt

* Prof. Sanday: Bampton Lectures, No. VII.

soon ceased; but a spirit not belonging to the ordinary course of things still dwelt in the companies of Christians—a spirit which gave the followers of "The Name" a special wisdom, a special power of brave endurance of suffering in the presence of world-wide opposition and hatred, in the presence of angry jealousy and sharp dread of the new unknown power growing up.

In spite of this determined enmity on the part of the world in which they lived and moved, an enmity which frequently flamed up in the form of bitter persecution, these Christians—for by that name at a very early date the followers of Jesus Christ were called—flourished in a strange fashion; their numbers continued, as year followed year, marvellously to increase. Their recruits, it is true, were drawn largely from the stratum composed of the lower classes of Roman society, but they by no means consisted entirely of persons drawn from that stratum. Their converts were to be found in all classes, in the Imperial household on the Palatine, in lordly patrician families, among senators and lawyers, soldiers and merchants, as well as the vast slave population. They included men and women of all ranks, of all ages. One singular characteristic feature was common to them all—they never resisted their oppressors, their persecutors. They were ever the most loyal of subjects; conspiracy, rebellion, discontent with the established state of things—though the established state of things was, as a rule, absolutely inimical to their very existence—were simply unknown among them during the whole period of 280 years of which we are writing.

Their life, their brave patient persistence, their marvellous endurance during these 280 years, tell us that *something* supernatural dwelt among them, inspired them, blessed them: *something*, termed in the phraseology of the Christians the "Holy Spirit," which did not belong to this world—which had never, as far as we know, been manifested to the same extent before in any society, and certainly has never been manifested since.

After this first period the Imperial Government gave up distrusting, opposing, persecuting these Christians. It went

further. The Empire soon adopted as the "State Religion" the creed of the long persecuted sect, the creed which during those 280 years she had chosen to regard as a pernicious superstition, positively inimical to the State. Thus the History of the Christian Church falls naturally into two great divisions: the first from its foundation A.D. 33 to A.D. 313, the date of the Edict of the Emperor Constantine, which gave peace to the Church; the second from A.D. 313 to the present time.

The first division embraces the chronicle of the prolonged years of struggle, when Christianity not only was *not* the religion of the civilised world, but was the religion of a sect at first comparatively small and chiefly powerful owing to its earnestness and its unity, though the numbers of the body scattered all over the Empire were after a time considerable. All through this period it was positively an illegal religion, proscribed as such by the laws of the Roman Empire. The nervous words of the famous Carthaginian teacher Tertullian (*circa* A.D. 200), admirably sum up the position of Christians all through that time—"*Non licet esse vos*" ("It is not lawful to be you").

The second division of the History of the Church comprises the whole period reaching from A.D. 313 to the present day. Not only did the Edict of Constantine in A.D. 313 make Christianity a lawful religion, but, a few years later, it became *the* religion of the State, the favoured cult, the cult professed by the Emperor.

A great gulf naturally separates these two divisions: for good or for evil, A.D. 313 marks the parting of the ways. In the second period the conditions which coloured the story of the Church in the first are completely changed. With the second period the present work does not profess to deal. It is virtually confined to the first period, that of stress and storm, when the confession of "the Name" was simply illegal, when its confessors were liable to the gravest penalties, to imprisonment, confiscation, even to death. These penalties were not always exacted, it is true, but the Christian professor was still liable to them. Roughly speaking,

about half of the 280 years were times of bitter, relentless persecution; but even during the periods of stillness, when the penalties, referred to above, were not generally enforced, the sword of the Law was ever hanging suspended over the heads of Christians, and the cord on which the sword hung was indeed a slender one. At any hour, the caprice of an Emperor, the fanatical zeal of a provincial governor, the unreasoning fury of a mob, excited by passion, greed, jealousy, unexplained uneasiness, might call down on the heads of the Christians resident in the city or province the execution of a law which pronounced them dangerous to the State, enemies of Rome. The story of these early years is one indeed of surpassing interest, for it describes how the Church of Christ in the face of tremendous opposition, with all the forces of the civilised world perpetually arrayed against it, slowly, surely won its way; using in its quiet steady progress no earthly arms, never resisting by force the will of the dominant power represented by the Government; its members only in comparatively rare cases complying with the summons to give up their profession of faith, constantly preferring to submit to any penalties, even to death, rather than deny the Name of the Founder, the Name they loved better than life.

Following a practice very different from that usual among professors of any of the persecuted forms of religion before their time, or even among professors of a persecuted religion after their time, the Christians throughout these years, although conscious of their numbers, their organisation and their power, never took up arms against their persecutors; these hated, despised, outlawed men continued to be the most loyal and peaceful subjects of the great world-wide Empire. It is this strange power of passive resistance, to which we have alluded above, and of which we shall speak again, which is one of the principal evidences of a special supernatural assistance being vouchsafed to them.

When we come to write in detail of the inner life of the Church, by which name the Christian sect from the earliest days of its existence styled itself, we shall see what were the

sure hopes which lived in the community from the beginning; hopes which inspired them to live the life which seemed so strange to their contemporaries; which gave them courage, in the midst of so many and great perils, serenely and calmly to face the loss of everything dear to man, even to welcome death. Briefly, their adored Founder, whom they justly looked upon as Divine, had supplied them with information respecting what would come after death—a question always of surpassing interest, and one which in the first and second centuries seems to have especially agitated the thoughts of the Roman world.

The Christian in possession of this information was freed from all dread of the hereafter; for him, to die was to depart and be with Christ; this was far better than to remain on here even under the circumstances of a happy earthly environment. The noble, the illustrious by birth or by fortune, was freed from all fear and dread of the Cæsar whose arbitrary and fatal power was so often a threatening spectre to the wealthy Roman noble. The slave, a member of the enormous sad-eyed caste, as a Christian became at once the freedman of the All-mighty Christ; very short indeed would be his period of slavery, it would terminate with this brief life. Death to the Christian slave signified immediate freedom; and a life of joy and peace too beautiful for human pen to describe would at once follow dissolution. To all faithful Christians, bond or free, patrician or plebeian, rich or poor, the religion of Jesus assured a blissful, restful, endless immortality.

The meetings together of the people who had embraced the faith of Jesus—whether held in some quiet upper chamber in a street of Rome or Antioch, of Ephesus or Carthage, or by some secluded river side, or in the dimly lit corridor of those Cemeteries men have come to call the Catacombs, where their dead were laid to sleep beneath old Rome—must have been strangely joyous; the gatherings where the hopes, the joys, the rewards of the Redeemer were discussed in terms of quiet but impassioned enthusiasm, must have been indeed inspiring. It was at these that they gathered their

courage, their brave patience, their sure hope of a blessed, blissful immortality.

Of such meetings, again and again repeated, we catch sight in the well-known words of Pliny, the Roman provincial Governor, in the writings of such teachers as Justin Martyr and Tertullian, in a few of the best authenticated Acts of Martyrs; more vividly perhaps still in the marvellously preserved passages and chambers of the network of cemeteries (termed catacombs) beneath the Appian and other roads hard by Rome: where many a dim and faded painting tells us how these Christians, during nearly three centuries, met together and rehearsed their glorious hopes, their happy outlook, their deathless faith.

It will be seen, as we proceed in this our work, how we have no lack of material out of which to construct the wondrous story of Christianity in the first, second, and third centuries.

These materials out of which our account of the laying of the early stories of Christianity is constructed, are many and various; more ample indeed by far than the ordinary student of Church History guesses. Only for one short period are they, comparatively speaking, scanty, and even for that short period authoritative data do not by any means fail us.

For the first eventful years, that is, from about A.D. 30 to A.D. 33, the materials are ample. They are mainly the Gospels and the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. From A.D. 33 the Acts and the Epistles of the New Testament carry on the story until the deaths of SS. Peter and Paul *circa* A.D. 67; while the testimony of S. John in his Gospel, Revelation, and Epistles, written after the deaths of S. Paul and S. Peter, tells us much concerning the character of the teaching of the great survivor of the original companions and disciples of Jesus up to the very end of the first century.

Thus, until the close of the first century the testimony of the Books of the New Testament is ever at hand, supplying us with materials which enable us to frame a fairly exhaustive account of the laying of the early stories of the

Christian Church; for a tradition which may be said to be unvarying relates how S. John lived and taught and wrote at Ephesus until the year of our Lord 99 or 100.

In addition to the inspired compositions of S. John, we possess a few writings put out in the last decade of the first century and in the early years of the second century, by men who were disciples of the Apostles; such as the Epistle of Clement of Rome, a letter addressed about A.D. 96 to the Church of Corinth and universally received by scholars as absolutely authentic; the Epistle of Barnabas which cannot be dated much later; the seven famous Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch, belonging to the year 107, now, in what is generally known as the Vossian Recension, after long controversy accepted as indisputably genuine; the Epistle of Polycarp of Smyrna sent *circa* A.D. 108; the Letter to Diognetus, the *first* part of which was evidently put out early in the second century. The recently discovered treatise known as the "Teaching of the Apostles," by an unknown writer, belongs to the same very early period. The "Apology of Aristides," presented to Hadrian, lately brought to light, was composed *circa* A.D. 124–130. The "Shepherd of Hermas" was written a few years later. The writings (of some considerable length) of Justin Martyr must be roughly dated A.D. 145–150, the varied works of Irenæus A.D. 170–180 or somewhat earlier; and it must be borne in mind that these early Christian authors were closely connected one with the other. Clement of Rome was the disciple of Peter and probably of Paul; Ignatius was a pupil of the Apostles; Polycarp, the friend of Ignatius, was a hearer of S. John the Apostle; Irenæus tells us how, when young, he sat at the feet of Polycarp. Thus an unbroken chain of writers and teachers links the age of S. John with the latter years of the second century and the earlier years of the third century; when there arose a group of famous Christian teachers, many of whose voluminous writings are preserved to us in so perfect a form that the most ample materials are present to our hand for a history of the struggles and anxieties of this time, lasting from the days of Irenæus of

Lyons (*circa* A.D. 170–180) until the middle of the third century. This group of teachers includes Clement of Alexandria (*circa* A.D. 190), Hippolytus of Rome (A.D. 201, generally quoted as Bishop of Portus), Tertullian of Carthage (*circa* A.D. 200), Origen of Alexandria (*circa* A.D. 230), and Cyprian of Carthage (*circa* A.D. 250). We give the rough dates assigned as the central points in the periods of influence of these great Christian teachers; an influence, of course, usually extending for some years before and after the year named.

Thus, although the list of trustworthy contemporary authorities for our history, for some seventy years after the death of S. John, is not a long one, still in the providence of God, enough of such writings has been preserved to enable us to form from them a reliable story of the work and progress of Christianity during that all-important period. With great force a modern scholar of the highest rank* thus lucidly sums up the reasons why this precious list of writings between A.D. 100 and A.D. 170 is not longer. "Time has pressed with a heavy hand upon such literature as the early Church produced. The unique position of the Apostles and Evangelists might shield their writings from its ravages, but the literature of the succeeding generation had no such immunity. It was too desultory in form, too vague in doctrine, to satisfy the requirements of more literary circles and a more dogmatic age. Hence while Athanasius, Basil and Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine and Ambrose were widely read and frequently transcribed, comparatively little attention was paid to those writings of the first and second centuries which were not included in the sacred Canon. The literary remains of the primitive age of Christianity, which to ourselves are of priceless value, were suffered to perish from neglect, a few fragments here and there alone escaping the general fate."

How much we have lost of these precious early works from which we might have drawn so much, we learn from the references and quotations of Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea

* Bishop Lightfoot of Durham: *The Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. I., Section 1, Part 1, S. Clement of Rome.

in the first half of the fourth century, in his invaluable "Ecclesiastical History." A catalogue of some of the writings belonging to the second century quoted by this eminent scholar and compiler, writings which were available in his day but now have vanished, is sufficient to indicate to us something of the extent of our loss.

1. *Papias,* the friend of Polycarp, on the very verge of the first age, early in the second century, wrote an "Exposition in five Books of the Oracles of the Lord."

2. *Hegesippus,* about the middle of the second century, put out an "Ecclesiastical History in five Books."

3. *Dionysius,* Bishop of Corinth, also in the middle of the second century, wrote many letters; Eusebius especially makes mention of "his inspired industry."

4. *Melito,* Bishop of Sardis; *Claudius Apollinaris,* Bishop of Hierapolis. These two once famous teachers, shortly after A.D. 150, were the authors of many works on Scriptural interpretations, controversial divinity, ecclesiastical order, and other subjects.

5. *Polycrates,* Bishop of Ephesus;

6. *Theophilus,* Bishop of Antioch; as writers, were well known in the last quarter of the second century when Eusebius wrote and used their works.

But, except for a few meagre fragments, all this voluminous literature quoted and referred to by writers such as Irenæus, second century, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, third century, Eusebius of Cæsarea, fourth century, has been blotted out,* has vanished; largely no doubt owing to the causes above detailed.

Very early in the History of Christianity we catch sight of teachers and schools of thought growing up outside the

* In the last two decades of the nineteenth century the researches of scholars in ancient libraries have brought to light several of the early works of the second century, notably "The Teaching of the Apostles," written in the early years of the second century; "The Apology of Aristides," *circa* A.D. 130–140; "The Diatessaron," a Harmony of the four Gospels, by Tatian, *circa* A.D. 175; the so-called "Apocalypse of S. Peter," of the first years of the second century; and the so-called "Gospel of S. Peter," *circa* A.D. 160. We may hope, as time goes on, that other pieces of this vanished early literature will come to light.

Christian communities commonly classed as heretics and heretical, but for the most part utterly alien from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, although they seem to have introduced the name of Christ into their strange and often purely fanciful systems. They may be roughly divided into two great divisions, the one Judaising and the other Gnostic. The Judaising Heretics more or less denied the reality of Christ's sufferings, curiously imagining that the Christ of the Gospel was only a phantom appearance. The other, the Gnostic Heretics, under different names, seem to have introduced some Christian elements into philosophical systems of a different, mostly of an Oriental origin.

The tares grew well-nigh as rapidly as did the wheat, and as Christians were multiplied and began to be numbered by thousands in the different countries of the Roman Empire, so these heretical bodies numbered also their thousands. The term Gnostic is apparently of later origin, and in the second and third centuries the heretics were generally named after the leaders of the special school to which they belonged, such as Valentinians and Marcionites, the names of two of the more conspicuous schools. These Gnostics appeared certainly as early as the close of the first century, and before the middle of the second century were beyond doubt widely spread; all through that century (the second) and the first half of the third, they evidently occupied a conspicuous position, owing to their numbers, their organisation, and their learning. After the first half of the third century the early heretical schools appear gradually to have withered away, and their place was filled by new and quite different schools of false teaching.

How numerous and formidable in the early days of Christianity were these heretical groups, we see from the prominence given to the refutation of their strange and perverted tenets in the fragments of primitive Christian literature which have come down to us; notably in the works of Irenæus of Lyons (second half of the second century), of Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian of Carthage and Origen of Alexandria (end of second century and beginning of third

century), and of Hippolytus of Portus and of Rome, who might also be dated as writing *circa* A.D. 200.

In the ranks of these numerous and widely spread heretical schools of thought were not a few scholars and thinkers, and even voluminous writers, from whose works we might have hoped to derive much knowledge of the teaching, the life, and the history of the early Christians, from whose ranks they had originally sprung in part, and with whom they were pleased to class themselves; but all their original works, writings, histories, expositions of the sacred books, have disappeared. It is believed that only one or two productions* of these strange early dissenters from the Catholic faith have come down to us. All our knowledge, alas! of these once famous schools is derived from treatises of their bitter opponents, put out by Christian teachers, such as Irenæus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen; for example, Origen (first half of third century) gives us some forty-eight extracts (some of considerable length) from the great Valentinian expositor Heracleon.

From Pagan writers, the compiler of early Christian History gets comparatively little assistance. A few short passages in Tacitus and Suetonius and in the well-known letters of Pliny the Younger and the Emperor Trajan are almost the solitary exceptions.

For a long period Christianity was little known to the majority of Roman literary men. It was by many mistaken for a Jewish sect; the religion of the Jew was despised generally, and when not despised, was feared and dreaded as a pernicious superstition; and when towards the middle and second half of the second century, the religion of the Christians, owing to the increasing numbers, the earnestness and the intense reality of the faith of the Christian communities in all parts of the Empire, compelled a certain recognition from the Government and the Emperor, a *studied* silence on the part of Pagan writers and thinkers was evidently

* The *πίστις σοφία* of Valentinus *circa* the middle of the second century (edited by Peterman, Berlin, 1851), and the recently discovered "Hymn of the Soul," perhaps the work of Bardesanes.

observed. They would not describe the progress of a religion, or discuss the curious problem of its mighty influence over so many souls. To the thoughtful Roman philosopher its steady advance boded no good to Rome; in his eyes it was rather a menace to the enduring prosperity of the Empire. A good example of this singular studied reticence is the solitary mention by the great and good Emperor Marcus, A.D. 161–180, of his Christian subjects; where he alludes to their fearlessness in the presence of death, to their ready willingness to die. But the Emperor's mention is a depreciatory one, and is coloured too evidently by the feelings of dislike and even dread with which he regarded these people who professed a faith he was unable, perhaps cared not, to understand.

Such a compilation as that on which we are at present engaged must include not only the record of the principal historical facts connected with the Christians who lived in the first three centuries, but must embrace also much that belongs to their private life. The effect of that faith, for which the Christians of the days of persecution gave up so much, upon the every-day life of its professors, must be dwelt upon at some length. We possess materials of the highest value for this special part of our work on the every-day life of the Christians.

From the remains of some of the early writers, such as Hermas, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Minucius Felix, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, we draw much of our knowledge here. These often take us into what we may term the every-day life of the Christians who lived in the first, second, and third centuries; they describe often vividly and graphically the difficulties and temptations, the hindrances and persecutions, to which the Christian was exposed. But besides these writings we possess some other and most important memoranda to which we may refer for such particulars. These are the special accounts of martyrs, and of men and women who suffered for the faith which they professed. Now these precious memoranda are divided into two classes. The first of these, the "Acts" properly so

called, are largely copies of the official reports (the *procès verbaux*) of the proceedings of the Roman Court of Justice before which the accused Christian was summoned, and by which the accused was condemned. Such copies of reports, bearing as they do a purely official character, were sold by the officials of the Court of Justice to friends of the accused, and were preserved by them, or most probably by the Ministers of the Church of which the condemned were members, as a memorial of those persons who, in witnessing a good confession sealed for the most part by the sacrifice of their lives, did honour by their good and noble example to the congregation to which they had belonged.

A few admirable specimens of such official reports, the genuineness of which is undisputed, are, amongst others, the Acts of S. Justin (Martyr), of S. Cyprian, and of the Scillitan martyrs. Only, however, a few of such official reports, most precious relics indeed, have come down to us. The second class, also commonly known as "Acts of the Martyrs," but more properly designated as the "Passions of Martyrs," are very numerous.

These are something more than dry official reports of the interrogations of the Court of Justice, and profess to give at length the story of portions of the life, especially of the imprisonment, trial, and death of the confessors or martyrs. Many of the details of these "Passions of the Martyrs" are improbable, deal largely with supernatural incidents connected with the confessor whose "passion" forms the subject of the narrative, and are evidently the work largely of narrators, or compilers of the lives, writing in many cases long after the events happened which they professed to relate as eye-witnesses; only a very few of these "passions" bear the stamp of genuineness, and have come unharmed through the crucible of criticism. Among these few acknowledged genuine contemporary "Passions" are "The Letter of the Church of Smyrna to the Philomelians which relates the Martyrdom of S. Polycarp"; "The Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne, which tells the Story of the Martyrs of A.D. 177"; "The Passion of S. Perpetua and her

Companions." There are besides these a few more such reliques which are generally accepted as genuine. But while we must set aside the actual authority of the great majority of these narratives as being mainly compilations of a period more or less removed from the time when the events related were said to have taken place, recent discoveries of archæologists, such as those of De Rossi and his successors at Rome, have nevertheless shown us that in the case of many of these so-called spurious "passions" a large substructure of truth existed, and that the general character of the recital was often based on events which really took place. Hence our views of much of what has been regarded as spurious and belonging to romance rather than to history, require, in the light of this late investigation by scholars, considerable modification and reconstruction. The importance of these late discoveries for our conceptions of the life led by the Christians roughly between A.D. 34 and 313, will be discussed later.

In such a history as that on which we are now engaged, nothing perhaps is so striking as the fact, demonstrated by abundant evidence drawn from all quarters of the Roman Empire during these 280 years, of the *oneness*, the *identity*, of the faith which lived in the countless scattered congregations of Christians in such different national centres as Rome and Corinth, Ephesus and Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage, and Lyons; of the *oneness* of the faith which inspired nobles and slaves, soldiers and traders, men and women, old and young, alike to live changed lives, to undergo unheard of dangers, to brave frightful perils, to endure tortures, to disregard death.

From the beginning the faith was one, absolutely changeless in its essential features. We read it expressed in clear emphatic language in the writings of Peter and Paul, who passed away by violent death in the 'sixties of the first century, and in the Gospel, Apocalypse, and Letters of John, who survived till the last years of the same century; and these had learned it from the Master Himself. We find the fundamental doctrines of the faith in the letters of disciples and pupils, in the Epistles of Clement of Rome,

of Ignatius of Antioch, of Polycarp of Smyrna, in the apologies and writings of their younger contemporaries and successors, such as Aristides, the apologist before the tribunal of the Emperor Hadrian; Justin Martyr, the scholarly Greek; and in the next generation Irenæus Bishop of Lyons, in Gaul. It is repeated by Hippolytus of Rome, by Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian of African Carthage, who wrote and preached and taught scarcely a hundred years after the Apostles of the Master had passed away. The same faith was again reiterated by the great teachers of the first half of the third century, by Origen of Alexandria and Cyprian of Carthage. After eighteen centuries the same precious changeless tradition is the heritage of the Christian Church, in all its essential features, alike in Moscow and Constantinople, in Rome and in London.

And the centre of all early Catholic teaching was Jesus Christ, His work for men, His love for men, His blood which He shed for men.

Critics who imagine that the lofty conceptions of later ages on the subject of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, of His Divinity, of His being Very God of Very God, were evoked by the Arian controversies of the fourth century, are strangely ignorant of the letter and spirit of the teaching of primitive Christianity. Indeed, the language used by such writers as Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch—the first of whom was the disciple of Paul and Peter, and the latter a scholar of the Apostles—and even by Hippolytus nearly a century later, in expressing their belief in our Lord's Divinity, while lacking the precision of the terminology determined by the great Church Councils of the fourth century, was occasionally so strong as almost to verge upon Patripassianism.*

* *Patripassian* was a name of reproach given at the end of the second century to those theologians who, without careful definition of the sole original Principality of the Father, claimed the Plenary Godhead for the Son the Redeemer. The more accurate theologians of that age when the air was charged with speculative controversies, drew an awful conclusion that the loose and somewhat startling phraseology used now and again without due consideration, asserted that the Father, the one primary principle, must have suffered on the cross.

Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons in Gaul, a great teacher of the last quarter of the second century, many of whose writings are preserved to us, singles out Clement of Rome's Letter to the Corinthians as transmitting in its fulness the Christianity taught by the Apostles, more especially by S. Peter and S. Paul. This letter exhibits the belief of his Church (that of Rome) as to the true interpretation of the Apostolic records. "To Clement, as to the mass of devout Christians of all ages, Jesus Christ is not a dead man whose memory is reverently cherished by men, or whose precepts are carefully observed, but an ever living, ever active Presence, who enters into all the circumstances of their being."*

A similar conception of Jesus Christ is found in Polycarp and Ignatius. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is also plainly taught in each of these very early writers, as are the doctrines of the Atonement and Mediation of Christ. There is absolutely a perfect accord in the teaching respecting these great fundamental doctrines of the Catholic Church in all the writings of the primitive fathers.

To give examples of the remarkable unity in the teaching of the first ages of Christianity:—A general agreement from very early times to keep holy the first day of the week in commemoration of the Resurrection of the Lord was common to all the Churches. The two great Sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, we find repeatedly mentioned in the earliest writings as a necessary part of Christian life. The most careful provision for the due administration of these Sacraments was made in all the Churches without exception.

With a few minor differences, the government and administration of the inner life of all the Christian Churches was the same. Before the middle of the second century each Church or organised Christian community had its three orders of ministers, its bishop, its presbyters, and its deacons; while very early in that century (the second) it is clear that the episcopal office was universally established in all the

* Bishop Lightfoot: *Clement of Rome*, vol. i., vi., p. 398.

churches; indeed, "Episcopacy is so inseparably interwoven with all the traditions and beliefs of men like Irenæus and Tertullian, whose writings are spread over the last thirty years of the second century and the first twenty of the third, that they betray no knowledge of a time when it was not." * The repeated and ample testimony of Ignatius here takes us back to the time of S. John, and although the estimate of the authority of episcopacy seems to have varied as time went on in different Christian centres, historical testimony is unanimous as to its existence even in the first century. There was no divergence here in the various Churches in the question of government.

Lastly, it is perfectly clear whence the Catholic† Church of the earliest days derived her faith and drew her teaching. One voice proceeds from the Christian communities of each of the great centres of the ancient Church, from Antioch and Alexandria, from Smyrna and from Rome, in the utterances of Ignatius and Barnabas, of Polycarp and Clement. The more famous early teachers, it is true, appealed rarely to written words, for they had *heard* the living voice of the Apostles of the Lord. But their teaching is based entirely upon those discourses and actions of the Lord which we find recorded in the Gospels, and upon *no others*. It is also evident that at least the great majority of the Epistles of S. Paul, S. James. S. Peter, and S. John contained in our New Testament

* Bishop Lightfoot: "Dissertation on the Christian Ministry" in *Commentary on Philippians*.

† The expression "Catholic" is used here in the technical sense it assumed about the middle of the second century. Originally it meant simply "universal," "general"; so the Resurrection is spoken of at an early date as the Catholic, *i.e.* the general, Resurrection. The earliest extant example of the use of the term in its technical theological sense, the "Catholic Church," is in the "Martyrdom of Polycarp," a document in the form of a letter addressed by the Church of Smyrna to the Church of Philomelium (*circa* A.D. 157). We find it again in the very early famous "Muratorian Fragment on the Canon," and in Clement of Alexandria towards the end of that century (the second). In these writings the term *Catholic Church* means the orthodox and apostolically descended Church, as distinguished from sectarian and heretical communities. *Catholic* simply is orthodox as opposed to heretical. In the third century, *e.g.* in all the writings of Tertullian and Origen, the word in its technical sense had passed into common use.

Canon were known to them; and upon these Epistles *and no others*, and upon the words and acts of the Lord above referred to, they based their teaching and formulated their creed; a changeless teaching, and a creed which from the first days has been the heritage of the Catholic Church.

Thus in its strange grand unity the Christian Church, in each of its important centres in Asia, Africa, and Europe, during the last decade of the first and the early decades of the second century, taught the same faith, told the same wondrous story, basing faith and story upon the same traditions oral and written, the traditions enshrined in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament.

Just the first little group of Apostolic men, Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, omitted to quote from the *written* records by name, because they had heard with their ears the words of the Gospels and the teaching of the Epistles from the lips of the Apostles of the Lord. But by the next generation of teachers, made up of men who had *not* been privileged to hear the voices of Peter, Paul, and John, while identically the same faith was taught and in almost the same words, the *written* traditions of these same men were quoted, and with ever greater circumstantiality as the years of the second century wore on. We would instance Papias, Justin, Irenæus, Clement, Tertullian, the Christian teachers at Hierapolis and at Rome, at Lyons, Alexandria and Carthage, never varying in the great essential doctrines, never suggesting any novel doctrine, only quoting from the same original records with ever greater accuracy and care as time advanced, teaching the same fundamental truths as did the Apostolic Fathers, Clement, Polycarp, and Ignatius.

The earliest "versions" into which the books of the New Testament were translated from the original Greek in which they were first written, the Syriac and the old Latin, both translations certainly made in the second century, tell the same story of the unity of Catholic Christendom in the all-important matter of the *Records* of primitive Christianity, received and acknowledged by the Christian Churches of the East and the West. The witness of these earliest translations

is most weighty, for while they exhibit the books contained in what is termed the New Testament Canon,* they sanction no Apocryphal books whatever. They speak here of the unity of the primitive Church, with the voice of very early Christendom, a voice none can gainsay or dispute.

This wonderful unity of the early Church in its estimate of the Divinity of the Founder, of His ever-presence among each company of those who believed in Him, and of His support of each individual member; in the great doctrines connected with the Founder, in the worship of the Church, in the government of the Church, in its acknowledgment of the one primitive tradition of the Founder's teaching, oral and written; is one of the secrets of its enormous power, which no opposition, no persecution, ever affected or touched. That unity immeasurably helped to secure the eventual triumph of the Church in the first quarter of the fourth century.

* The omissions of one or other of these earliest versions to include certain of the Epistles, notably that of S. James, the "Hebrews," and the Apocalypse of S. John, omissions owing to *local* and other special reasons, do not affect the great argument. Combined with the original Greek, these ancient versions practically represent the New Testament Scriptures, just as we now possess them, as they were read throughout the whole of Christendom towards the close of the second century of the Christian Era.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST STAGES.

SECTION I.—THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Our recital in detail of the events connected with the rise and progress of Christianity begins with the year of our Lord 62. In that year the writer of the "Acts of the Apostles" lays down his pen, and for the history of the Church of Christ in the years immediately following that date we are dependent, as far as regards inspired sources, on scattered notices which we gather mainly from the Pastoral Epistles of S. Paul, from the two Epistles of S. Peter, especially the first, from the writings of S. John—his Gospel and Epistles, belonging to the last years of the century, and his Apocalypse*—and from certain other writings included in the New Testament Canon, such as the Epistle to the Hebrews.

But after A.D. 62, when the memoirs of the "Acts of the Apostles" were closed, we possess no continuous chronicle by an inspired writer, such as we find in the first three Gospels and in the "Acts," of the Church's foundation, work, and progress. The task of the compiler really begins from that year (A.D. 62), when we believe that S. Paul was released from his Roman imprisonment, and for a period of some five or six more years resumed his missionary labours. Of those labours we possess little or no trustworthy information. Tradition is unanimous in asserting that the appeal which the Apostle made in the Court House at Cæsarea to

* The date of this work (A.D. 68–70) is discussed below, p. 58.

the Emperor terminated successfully; that he was acquitted of the charges laid against him by his Jewish enemies, and that after his acquittal he again resumed his old work, and —in the language of his disciple Clement, who was afterwards Bishop of the Roman Church—preached the Gospel in the East and West, instructing the whole world (*i.e.* the Roman Empire) in righteousness; travelling even to the extremity of the West before his martyrdom. This martyrdom, according to universal tradition, took place at Rome about A.D. 67–8. We shall presently relate the terrible calamities which befel the Roman Christians between A.D. 62–3 and A.D. 67–8. It was no doubt in the course of these dread events that the great teacher laid down his own life.

But up to A.D. 62 the Divine story shrined in the New Testament Canon relates the beginning of Christianity. The Synoptical Gospels known as S. Matthew, S. Mark, and S. Luke speak of the first three years: these are too sacred for ordinary analysis. They deal with only one life, but it is that of the Divine Founder of the religion which all the world is by degrees to embrace—not rapidly as men count years, but surely,* each succeeding decade enrolling fresh recruits for the Christian army. Then the "Acts of the Apostles" speaks of the progress of the religion after the first three years; it tells of the Ascension morning and after. The two termini of the "Acts" are A.D. 33 and A.D. 62. It is a wonderful book inspired by the Divine Wisdom; but, differing from the Gospels, it does not defy analysis, for the persons whose "acts" are related in it are mere mortals; men, many of them highly blessed, owing to the work entrusted to them, but men of like passions with ourselves.

* On the morrow of the Ascension of our Lord the Christian Church numbered a few hundreds—certainly not a thousand. Three thousand, then five thousand, were added by the preaching of Peter after the first Pentecost. The number gradually increased. It has been roughly computed that three hundred years after Christ about two persons in every three hundred of the population of the globe were Christian. Now in A.D. 1901 the proportion is said to be over two in seven.

The "Acts" takes up the story on the morrow of the Resurrection of the Lord—on the morrow of the wonderful event which was really the commencement of Christianity. At the rock tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa, in the eyes of the friends and foes of Jesus, the strange career of the Great Master appeared to be closed for ever. In spite of the words of the crucified Teacher, no one appeared to have even dreamed of a resurrection of the loved or hated Jesus; seemingly all was at an end.

The Evangelists in their closing chapters, the author of the "Acts" in his beautiful memoir, serene and unimpassioned, tell the true story of their disappointment, disillusion, cowardice, despair, which passed into intense joyful surprise. They conceal nothing.

Again, the astonishment, vexation, dismay of the Sanhedrim and of the Jewish rulers is portrayed with the same quiet and passionless truthfulness. The governing body of the Hebrew people had worked their will upon the Teacher they hated. They had done Him to death. His followers, whom they looked upon as persons of humble origin, of little learning, and of no particular ability, were dispersed; they could afford to treat such men and women with contemptuous neglect. The influential men in the Sanhedrim knew of Peter and John, they were acquainted with the Maries, but they did not care to secure their persons—they were not worth a second thought; they would quietly disappear into the mass of the people whence they came, now that their Leader was gone. These able and unscrupulous persons, Annas, Caiaphas, and the others, judged, and judged correctly, that the whole movement centred in the person of Jesus; and now that He was out of the way surely the movement had collapsed, was stamped out, crushed, extinguished and for ever!

When the startling intelligence was brought to the Sanhedrim chiefs that the group of despised and illiterate Galilæans, of whom they had expected never to hear again, were teaching and even preaching with splendid eloquence hard by the sacred Temple, and were positively making

converts by thousands,* great indeed must have been their surprise and dismay. *Something* had evidently happened which had changed these timorous, saddened men into fearless preachers of a condemned religion and a dead Master. What had transformed illiterate fishermen and peasants into impassioned, eloquent, and even learned teachers and preachers? It was the Resurrection of Jesus which had effected the former; it was the illapse of the Spirit in the Divine Breath of Pentecost which produced the latter startling phenomenon.

From the morrow of the Resurrection and after Pentecost the opposition of the Sanhedrim and of the rulers of the Jews to the new sect of Christians (we use the well-known appellation, though it belongs to a somewhat later date) was fitful and uncertain; now showing itself chiefly in measures of extreme severity and harshness, now paying apparently little heed to the vast developing power. Evidently from the "Acts" narrative, various feelings, perplexity and some awe, as well as jealousy and hate, were at work among the Sanhedrim and the influential Jews. At all events, the fitful opposition produced little if any effect on the fortunes of the fast growing community of believers in the crucified and risen Jesus. The main interest in the story of the "Acts" is concentrated upon the development of the Church or community of Christians.

For a considerable period it remained a strictly *Hebrew* Church; but gradually, and partly through supernatural agencies, the consciousness of their world-wide mission came to the Christian leaders. For several years after the Pentecost miracle the commanding personality of Peter gave him the first place in the community. With him, however, we find constantly associated John, the Disciple whom Jesus especially loved. It was to Peter that the revelation, which worked so mighty an influence on the Christian religion, came—the

* The writer of the "Acts" mentions the numbers—three thousand and subsequently five thousand—who joined the ranks of the believers in Jesus of Nazareth after some of the burning and moving addresses of Peter at Jerusalem. The compiler never indulges in over-coloured pictures. The narrative is scrupulously unemotional.

revelation which Isaiah centuries before had plainly foreshadowed in his striking words: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isaiah xlix. 6.)

Christianity during its first years of existence made extraordinary and rapid progress, but exclusively in the *Jewish* world. It was not, indeed, by any means confined to Jerusalem or to Palestine; for it numbered among its converts Jews dwelling in such centres as Antioch and probably at Rome; but it was, as it has been well termed, an expanded Judaism. It was preached by Jews, and was addressed to Jews; it was limited, national, exclusive. But all this, apparently, after some three years, was changed, the borderland of Samaria, between Judaism and heathendom, being then included in the great Christian fold—Peter and John, on the Samaritan* mission, still representing the Apostolic College.

But a far more important development of Christian work was entrusted in the first place to the famous Apostolic leader: the Church of Jesus must become a world-wide Church.

A Divine revelation contained in a striking vision disclosed to Peter that all the rights and privileges of the Christian Church might be, ought to be, offered to the whole heathen world. In the Roman city of Cæsarea took place the baptism and admission of the heathen soldier, the Roman Cornelius; the old barrier between the Jew and the Gentile was broken down; henceforth in the Christian community there was no distinction between the Jew, the child of the chosen people, and the Gentile of the great world which lay outside the old charmed circle of the Children of Israel.

This action of Peter in admitting the great Gentile world into the Christian community was formally approved at

* The Samaritans, although unacknowledged by the genuine Jews, claimed to be Jews, and in many respects lived like Jews. They can scarcely be classified, however, as Jews, but emphatically they were not heathen or idolaters.

Jerusalem by a Council of Apostles and Brethren, some eight or nine years after the first Pentecost.

The first great section of the "Acts of the Apostles" may be said to be closed by this all-important development of Christian work. From this epoch, the chief work in the now widely extended Church passes into other hands than those of Peter. A master mind appears on the stage, and a trained and cultured Jewish scholar occupies the chief place in the work of preaching Jesus to the vast world which lay outside the Holy Land. Paul, a Jew of Tarsus, an important personage in the official world of Jerusalem, is the prominent person henceforth in the book of the "Acts": his mission journeys, which extended through the populous districts of Asia Minor and Greece, the opposition he met with, his striking successes, his first arrest by the Roman Government at the instigation of the Jews, and his subsequent arrival at Rome, fill up most of the remainder—the larger half, indeed, of the inspired book of the "Acts." The time occupied in the "Acts" recital covers about thirty years, perhaps scarcely so much. The following table of the rough dates of some of the principal events of these thirty years will give an idea of the time taken up by these early endeavours, developments, changes in the Christian Church. But it must be borne in mind that the *exact* chronology of this period, especially in the earlier portion, is somewhat uncertain.

Chronology of the Acts.

	A.D.
The public Ministry of Jesus Christ commenced...	30
The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus ...	33
The first Pentecost and its miracle...	33
Preaching of Peter and John to the Samaritans ...	35–6
Baptism and formal admission of the Roman centurion Cornelius to the Christian Church, by Peter, approved by Council of Apostles and Brethren at Jerusalem	41–2
First missionary journey of Paul to Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia	45–6

	A.D.
Paul's missionary work among the Gentiles formally approved by a Council of Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem	49–50
Paul's *second journey* in Galatia, Lycaonia, Macedonia, Attica (Athens), Corinth...	51–4
Paul's *third journey* in Galatia, Proconsular Asia (Ephesus), Macedonia, Corinth, Achaia ...	54–8
Paul's arrest at Jerusalem, imprisonment at Cæsarea, journey to Rome	58–9
Paul's Roman imprisonment, acquittal and release; close of "Acts"	60–3

Such is the "Acts of the Apostles," a book compiled according to the universal tradition of Christianity by Luke, an intimate friend and a companion of Paul, and received among the inspired books of the New Testament by all the Churches at a very early date. Its extreme importance as a history of the Church during the thirty years which followed the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus cannot be overrated. It is penetrated, permeated with the supernatural—accounts of miracles, revelations, visions, supernatural appearances of the Lord, and occasionally of Beings not belonging to this world of ours, Beings called angels, like golden threads run through the whole tapestry of the work of the "Acts." They cannot be separated from it. They form a necessary part of it.

The writer is intensely anxious to give a true picture of the time. Nothing is concealed or veiled. The weaknesses, doubts, fears, mistakes of the human actors are faithfully recorded. Well-nigh a third of these early pages of Christian history are filled with the account of the missionary travels of that great teacher who was entrusted by the Holy Spirit to carry the first message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world. These journeys beyond the frontiers of the Land of Promise are dwelt upon with considerable detail. The manner of reception of the Divine message in important centres, such as in Ephesus, in the Pisidian Antioch, in Athens, Corinth, Thessalonica, Rome, is described with more or less fulness.

This weighty section of the earliest Christian history—the "Travel Document" as it has been termed—has been woven into the general story by the writer of the "Acts," little changed evidently from the original document composed no doubt by S. Paul himself, or written under his immediate influence. The great space allotted in the "Acts" to this "Travel Document" is an indication of the vast importance attached by the early Christians to the movements which opened the portals of the Church to the world lying outside the sacred and hitherto rigidly guarded enclosure of the Chosen People.

We have found that in the first years Christianity was but an *expanded Judaism*, preached by Jews and addressed to Jews. The Christian Church of the first days was a purely Hebrew Church. The Messiah was a Jew of the purest race; His disciples were earnest, we should say, even bigoted Jews; for several years no Gentile seems to have been admitted into the sacred circle of Apostles and their disciples. Even after the breaking down of the immemorial wall which surrounded the earliest Christian Church as it had done the Jewish Synagogue, we find Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles telling his wondrous story *first* in the synagogues of cities such as Ephesus, Corinth, and Pisidian Antioch. It was from these Jewish centres that he seems, certainly for a long while, to have gathered his converts for the main part.

The religious revolution inaugurated by Peter and developed by Paul, Barnabas, and their immediate followers was of tremendous import. For the Church of Jesus Christ to become the Church of the world a thousand religious fences must be broken down, numberless prejudices of convention and tradition must be sacrificed, numberless cherished safeguards which had hitherto been the life of the nation must be abandoned. No wonder that so large a portion of the "Acts" is consecrated *firstly* to the recital telling of the revelation to Peter which directed that all privileges of the Christian converts should be offered to the whole heathen world, and *secondly* to the famous "Travel Document" of Paul, relating how the command contained in

the revelation to Peter was carried into effect by Paul and his companions.

This book, which contains the history of the Catholic Church during the thirty years which followed the Resurrection of the Lord, was, as we have said, received into the Canon of Holy Scripture from the earliest times. Its authenticity and genuineness have never been disputed. It is contained in the oldest version made in the second century, viz. the Peschitta-Syriac—a revision of the old Syriac version, probably made and used within the Apostolic age—and in the Old Latin, made and used certainly before A.D. 170. The great Christian writers who flourished towards the end of the second century, Irenæus (a hearer of Polycarp) in Gaul, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian of Carthage, frequently and expressly quote this book. It is not too much to say that from the close of the first century onwards the Catholic Church has ever, without a dissentient voice, accepted as inspired the testimony of the "Acts of the Apostles."

SECTION II.—THE JEW IN ROME.

In less than two years after the acquittal of Paul and his subsequent departure from Rome on his last long missionary journey, the terrible persecution directed by the Emperor Nero against the Christian community at Rome began. The date of this awful calamity was August, A.D. 64. With more or less severity this persecution lasted some four years.

Before telling the dark story of the Neronic persecution, which to a certain extent determined the hostile relations that, with intervals of partial quiet, were henceforward to exist between the Christian sect and the Imperial Government for nearly two centuries and a half, it will be well to give some description of the Roman Christian community, which at the early date of A.D. 64 was numerous enough and of sufficient importance to attract the hostile notice of the Emperor Nero and his advisers.

We have already dwelt on the fact that in the first days of Christianity the Church of Jesus Christ was purely a

Jewish community. The Divine Founder in His earthly relationships was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. His disciples, their converts, the first Christian communities, were Jews; to the ordinary Roman citizen, Christians were simply a Jewish sect.

Rome, from the year A.D. 33 onwards, was more than the capital of the civilised world; more than merely the seat of the Government of the Roman Empire; it was the centre of all its life, civil, military, literary. To take a modern comparison, Rome in the first and second centuries of the Christian era was all that London and Paris, Berlin and Vienna, St. Petersburg, modern Rome, and New York together, are to the civilised world of the twentieth century.

In this great centre of peoples, the Jew for a considerable period had been a well-known personage. As early as 138 B.C. there was a Jewish colony in Rome. In 58 B.C. we come upon a curious reference to the presence and influence of this people in the great metropolis. Cicero was pleading in the Forum for one Flaccus, who had incurred the enmity of the Jews of Rome by forbidding the sending of the sacred tribute to Jerusalem; and from time to time in the course of his pleading, we read how the great lawyer lowered his voice in order that what he said might not be heard by the crowd of Jews thronging the forum: "You know," said the famous advocate, "how numerous they (the Jews) are, and how united, and what commanding influence they exert, sometimes turbulently in the public assemblies; to offend the Jews is a matter of the gravest import."

Julius Cæsar, in his day of supreme power, markedly courted these stranger residents, and bestowed on them a succession of favours. While he lived these Jews were among his most steadfast adherents, and after the Dictator's murder they showed their attachment by gathering round his funeral pyre on the Campus Martius, weeping and uttering loud cries of lamentation by night as by day. The Emperor Augustus (27 B.C. to A.D. 14) continued the favours shown to them by the first and greatest of the Cæsars. After the death of Augustus the influence which these, for

the most part, poor stranger folk, gradually acquired in Roman society evoked considerable jealousy, dislike, and suspicion; and an anti-Jewish feeling, somewhat of the character of the modern *Jüden-hetze* (hatred of the Jews), so common a feature in the nineteenth century in many of the Continental cities of Europe, suggested strong measures of repression on the part of the Government. In A.D. 19, under the Emperor Tiberius, they were summarily expelled from the city, and a similar decree in A.D. 49 again banished them from Rome. Yet these expulsions had but little permanent effect. The Jews were too deeply rooted to be eradicated permanently, and very soon after each banishment they seem to have returned to the metropolis in greater numbers than ever.

What now was the secret of their power, of their influence? The question has been often asked, it is being asked still. The Jews were not a specially beautiful race, if physical beauty is in the question. They have rarely been singled out as specially winning writers or profound thinkers, or far-seeing statesmen; they have numbered in their ranks but few soldiers or sailors of pre-eminent skill, or conspicuous valour, though perhaps an average number of each and all of these have never been wanting in the Jewish race. No important historian, however far above all race-partiality or favour, would dream of speaking of them as a lovable people, as a people likely to call out feelings of enthusiasm or admiration. The feeling the Jew has evoked has been rather dislike—not unmixed with envy at their strange prosperity, particularly in commercial matters important and unimportant, and their vast unexplained power in the various centres where any considerable numbers of them have settled. What then was their secret? The answer is found in the Old Testament story. For some reason unknown to men the Eternal God Whose ways are not our ways, ages before the Cæsars ruled in Rome over the world, chose them as His peculiar people, and in spite of their faults and many shortcomings, the blessing of the Eternal God has ever rested on them. Again and again they forfeited through their faults

and repeated disobedience the position among men they might have occupied; the awful deed of the century of which we are writing, consummated at Jerusalem in the year of grace 33, was the crowning sin; henceforth they were the people under the Divine curse. But the immemorial blessing was still theirs; the blessing which has preserved them as a separate people, powerful even under circumstances of the deepest degradation and oppression. Changeless in the midst of change, the Jew is with us still. Is it then a baseless dream which sees for this strange deathless race a glorious future, when they shall look on Him Whom they pierced as their Messiah, Friend, Redeemer, God?

But at no period in their long drawn-out, wonderful history does it seem that the Jews exercised a greater and more peculiar an influence than in the society of Rome, the world-capital in the first century of the Christian era. The Jewish Sabbath, for instance, is frequently alluded to by the poets of that age; curiously enough, this exclusively national observance found favour even in certain Pagan circles. Not a few among the higher ranks in the Roman world became in greater or less degree converts to Judaism, under the general appellation of "proselytes of the gate." Poppæa, the powerful mistress of Nero, was probably one of them, as was Fuscus Aristius, the friend of the poet Horace, to take well-known instances. But the influence of the Jews of Rome extended far beyond the circle of professed proselytes. In a restless, immoral age the fervour, the rigid morality, the intense earnestness of the Hebrew colony impressed Roman society and gave them a moral influence quite disproportioned to their actual numbers.*

* Allard: *Histoire des Persécutions* (Paris, 1892), vol. i., chap. i., "Tout ce monde en haillons est animé d'une vie intense, il travaille, et celà déjà est une originalité au milieu de la plèbe oisive de Rome. Il propage sa religion par tous les moyens; ses mendiants et ses sorcières ne négligent pas l'occasion de dire un mot de leur loi à l'oreille de la matrone dont elles sollicitent l'aumone. Il prie et il etudie ses livres saints dans Rome qui n'a pas de théologie et qui ne prie pas. Ses Synagogues . . . defendues avec energie contre les intrusions sont des points de ralliement pour la population israelite de chaque quartier . . . partout s'y reconnaissent les sentiments d'union, de fraternité, de miséricorde

But the number of Jews who made up the Roman Jewish colony was not inconsiderable. About the middle of the first century they have been computed as amounting to between twenty and thirty thousand, or even more. They were mostly very poor, the few richer members of the colony —and there were a few, doubtless, very wealthy members— studiously concealing their riches.

A modern writer in a brilliant and vivid word-picture has painted the Ghetto or Jewish quarter of modern Rome, before the Ghetto was swept away to make room for recent improvements. It is an accurate description of a city settlement of the changeless people, and with singularly little alteration would admirably describe a Jewish quarter in the Imperial Rome of the first century. "The old Roman Ghetto was a low-lying space enclosed within a circuit of a few hundred yards, in which four or five thousand human beings were permanently crowded together in dwellings centuries old, built upon ancient drains and vaults that were constantly exposed to the inundations of the river (the Tiber), and always reeking with its undried slime; a little pale-faced, eager-eyed people, grubbing and grovelling in masses of foul rags for some tiny scrap richer than the rest and worthy to be sold again; a people whose many women, haggard, low-speaking, dishevelled, toiled half-doubled together upon the darning and piecing and smoothing of old clothes, whose many little children huddled themselves into corners to teach one another to count; a people of sellers who sold nothing that was not old or damaged, and who had nothing that they would not sell; a people clothed in rags, living among rags, thriving on rags, a people strangely proof against pestilence, gathering rags from the city to their dens when the cholera was raging outside the Ghetto's gates and rags were cheap, yet never sickening of

d'une communité de petites gens, ou l'on gagne son pain à la sueur de son front, ou l'on secourt ses pauvres, ou l'on vit entre soi loin du monde, d'une même pensée réligieuse. Telle est cette étrange population juive, attrayante et repugnante, intrigante et pieuse, riche en haillons et puissante dans sa misère. Elle possède une force morale inconnue de l'antiquité."

the plague themselves; a people never idle, sleeping little, eating sparingly, labouring for small gain amid dirt and stench and dampness, till Friday night came at last, and the old crier's melancholy voice ran through the darkening alleys: 'The Sabbath has begun'—and all at once the rags were gone, the ghostly old clothes that swung like hanged men, by the neck, in the doorways of the cavernous shops flitted away into the utter darkness within; the old bits of iron and brass went rattling out of sight like spectres' chains; the hook-nosed antiquary drew in his cracked old show case; the greasy frier of fish and artichokes extinguished his little charcoal fire of coals; the slipshod darning-women, half blind with six days' work, folded the half-patched coats and trousers, and took their rickety old rush-bottomed chairs indoors with them.

"Then on the morrow, in the rich synagogue with its tapestries, its gold, and its gilding, the thin, dark men were together in their hats and long coats, and the sealed books of Moses were borne before their eyes and held up to the north and south and east and west, and all the men together lifted up their arms and cried aloud to the God of their fathers.

"But when the Sabbath was over they went back to their rags and their patched clothes, and to their old iron and their antiquities, and toiled on patiently again, looking for the coming of the Messiah.

"And there were astrologers and diviners and magicians and witches and crystal-gazers among them, to whom great ladies came on foot, thickly veiled, and walking delicately amidst the rags, and men, too, who were more ashamed of themselves, and slunk in at nightfall to ask the Jews concerning the future—even in our time as in Juvenal's, and in Juvenal's day as in Saul's of old."*

Into the midst of this busy, active, teeming population of Roman Jews fell the seeds of the Gospel message at a very

* From the *Ave Roma Immortalis* of Marion Crawford (vol. ii. xi.), Sant. Angelo, 1898.

early date—perhaps even as early as A.D. 33—borne by some of those "strangers of Rome" mentioned by the writer of the "Acts of the Apostles" when he tells the story of Pentecost and its marvel, and particularises the nationality of the first hearers of S. Paul at Jerusalem. These "strangers of Rome" on their return to their Italian home would probably have told the wondrous story they had heard in Jerusalem, and so in the Imperial City no doubt sprang up at a very early date in the Jewish colony a little band of men, ever rapidly increasing, who believed in the Risen Jesus.

Roman Catholic writers consider that some ten years after the "first" Pentecost the Jewish Christian Church at Rome was visited by the great Apostle Peter himself, who after that date, roughly given as A.D. 42, resided in Rome until A.D. 49, in which year the Emperor Claudius banished the Jews from the city. Peter, of course, left Rome with the rest of his fellow-countrymen. These writers consider that the Apostle did not return to the capital before A.D. 62, and that it is highly probable that the two Apostles met in Rome shortly before the spring of A.D. 63, the date usually assigned for the acquittal of Paul and his release from his long imprisonment. Paul then, according to their theory, went forth again, journeying westwards, resuming his missionary travels, Peter remaining in Rome. Paul returned to the city, it is generally assumed, in A.D. 67, and in that year, or the following, with his brother Apostle Peter, suffered martyrdom.*

The questions, however, of the duration of S. Peter's ministry at Rome, and of the authenticity of the earlier visit, *circa* A.D. 42–3, although of the deepest interest on many accounts to the student of early Christian records, are not of vital importance. Of the highest importance, however, is the condition of the Roman community at the epoch of the persecution of Nero, which began in the middle of the year 64. This terrible experience of the Church of the metropolis

* The somewhat vexed question as to the presence and work of S. Peter at Rome, and especially of the earlier visit of the Apostle to the capital of the Empire *circa* A.D. 42, is discussed at some length in Appendix B.

we are about to relate with some detail. It was no mere passing cloud; its dread results were far-reaching. It may be said without exaggeration to have largely determined the position of Christians in the Empire for a period roughly of two hundred and fifty years.

There is no doubt whatever that the Church of Rome in A.D. 64 was a considerable and even in some respects an influential community. The language of Tacitus, who was by no means kindly disposed to the growing sect, is decisive as to its numbers. Had the Christians of Rome not been a well-known and somewhat influential body, Nero would never have thought it worth his while to turn his attention to them, and to make the sect his scapegoat in the matter of the great fire, of which he was suspected to have been the contriver.

We possess no definite records of the Roman Church of this early period. The salutations of S. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, written from Corinth *circa* A.D. 58, and in his Epistle to the Philippians, written during his Roman imprisonment *circa* A.D. 61–2, help us to form our conception of the community. Besides these contemporary references to the state of Christianity at Rome in the years 58–62, we possess a striking incident connected with the year 57 related by Tacitus*—an incident upon which De Rossi's later discoveries in the Catacombs throw considerable light.

What now do these references—Christian and Pagan—tell us? That the Roman Christian community was made up of very different elements; was of a composite character; that in it the majority were certainly poor, including not a few slaves and freedmen in its ranks; but that there were on its rolls the names of some high-born personages. Varied nationalities also were represented in this great typical early Christian community. The Jew, and the Pagan by birth and training, stood side by side. The Greek and the Oriental, as well as the Italian and the Roman-born, had each at some time during the period covered by the "Acts of the Apostles" received from the lips of a Peter or Paul or John, or perhaps

* See pp. 37, 38.

had heard and welcomed through the medium of an Evangelist unknown to fame, the message of life.

When Paul wrote to the Roman Christians from Corinth in A.D. 58, although he had never been at Rome, he evidently knew well many of the members of its community. The long list of salutations addressed to individuals of various nationalities and to persons of different ranks tells us this; while households even are included in these greetings of the "travelled" Apostle. The references in his epistle written from Rome to the Philippians *circa* A.D. 61–2 are even more suggestive, especially the well-known greeting from "the members of Cæsar's household" (Phil. iv. 22). The "domus Cæsaris," "domus Augusta" (the household of Cæsar) who sent their salutations to Philippi were presumably earlier converts who did not owe their knowledge of Christ to S. Paul's teaching at Rome. The "household of Cæsar" in the first century of the Christian era occupied a large and conspicuous place in the life of Rome. It included persons of exalted rank and of the highest consideration, as well as a great crowd of slaves and freedmen. The most elaborately organised of modern royal establishments would give only a faint idea of the multiplicity and variety of the offices in the palace of the Cæsars. The departments in the household were divided and sub-divided, the offices were numberless. The "tasters," for instance, constituted a separate class of servants under their own chief; even the pet dog had a functionary assigned to him. The aggregate of Imperial residences on or near the Palatine formed a small city in itself; but these were not the only palaces even in Rome. Moreover, the country houses and estates of the Imperial family all contributed to swell the numbers of the "domus Augusta."

But besides the household in its more restricted sense, the Emperor had in his employ a countless number of officials, clerks, and servants of every degree required for the work of the several departments, civil and military, which were all concentrated in him as head of the State.* And

* Bishop Lightfoot: *Clement of Rome*, vol. i., pp. 25–6, and *Ep. to Phil.*, pp. 167–70.

Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome.

THE PALACE OF THE CÆSARS.

View from S. Prisca, the church built, according to tradition, in 280 A.D. on the site of the house of Aquila and Priscilla.

this vast "household of Cæsar" was made up of all nationalities as well as being composed of all sorts and conditions of men. There were Romans, of course, among them, and Italians by birth, but perhaps the greater number were Greeks, Egyptians, and Orientals, including a fair proportion of Jews.

It was into this great Imperial household that Christianity at a very early date penetrated. It was from some among this mighty mixed house of Cæsar that the greetings contained in the Philippian Epistle were sent by Paul. But it must be remembered that the "Faith" which was living among them was a power—how real, events soon showed—*before* the great Gentile Apostle had arrived in Rome as a closely guarded prisoner.

It is no baseless thought that the presence, the long continued presence, according to the immemorial tradition, of such a one as Peter had helped to fan the flame of devotion which Paul found burning so brightly when, as a prisoner, he was lodged in or near the great Prætorian barracks or camp outside the wall to the north-east of the city, hard by the modern Via Nomentana.*

Thus the synagogues of the thirty or more thousand† of the Jewish residents in Rome, the vast mixed multitude of the dwellers in the metropolis of the world, including the "household of Cæsar," supplied their quota to the ever-growing company of adherents to the new faith.

But besides these were some—few perhaps, but still enough to give a powerful influence to the strange community—out of the mighty and exclusive Patrician order who had no special connection with the "house of Cæsar." There is a well-known story in Tacitus ‡ of a great lady—one Pomponia Græcina, the wife of Plautus, the general who conquered

* The site of the Prætorian barrack or camp is well known to the modern English traveller. It is a little to the south of the Porta Pia and the present English Embassy. (A.D. 1901.)

† Many more probably, when the adherents and less strict converts of the Jews are taken into account, such as Proselytes of the Gate. These were very numerous in the Rome of the first century.

‡ *Ann.*, xiii. 32.

Britain under the Emperor Claudius. In the year 58 Pomponia was accused of having embraced a "foreign superstition." The matter was referred, in accordance with Roman custom, to a Domestic Court, in which her husband sat as chief judge. The noble lady was adjudged innocent. She lived afterwards, we read, to a great age, but in continuous sadness. No one, however, interfered with her any more, protected as she was by her stainless character and exalted rank. For a long while the strange superstition in which this eminent person was accused of sharing was supposed by many students to have been "Christianity," but later discoveries have converted the supposition into what is almost a certainty. In the course of his exhaustive investigations into the network of subterranean corridors devoted to the burial of the dead Christians around the Catacomb of Callistus, De Rossi has shown that the oldest portion of that vast cemetery on the Appian Way, known as the Cemetery of Lucina, belongs to the first century. In this ancient burial place a sepulchral inscription belonging to the close of the second century has been found with the name "Pomponius Græcinus"; other neighbouring monuments bear the names of the same Pomponian House. It is clear from the character of the decorations of the sepulchral chambers that the crypt was constructed in the first instance by some Christian lady of high rank before the close of the first century for her poorer brother and sister Christians.* De Rossi considers that the name "Lucina," which belongs to this division of the Catacomb of Callistus, is only another name of Pomponia Græcina herself; the name "Lucina" not being found in Roman history, the famous archæologist considers it highly probable that it was assumed by Pomponia Græcina in accordance with early Christian phraseology, which spoke of baptism as an "enlightening" (φωτισμός). Be this how it may, the strange discovery of the connection of the

* This pious custom was a common practice in the Christian communion of the first and second centuries, and to it *the beginnings* of the enormous network of Christian cemeteries or catacombs beneath the suburbs of old Rome must be attributed. This is explained in detail in the chapter which is devoted to the Catacombs (p. 267).

Pomponian family with the ancient cemetery is a strong confirmation of the surmise long entertained by scholars, that Pomponia was a Christian.

No doubt she was an example of other persons of high rank who had accepted the easy yoke and light burden of Christ in that age of inquiry and fervent longings after the nobler and better life. Only a few years later, as we shall see, history tells us of yet nobler converts. For before that first century had run its course, the religion of Jesus had found its way into the family of the Cæsars. The "Atheism" for which the Emperor Domitian's cousin, Flavius Clemens, suffered death in A.D. 95, and for which his wife Domitilla was banished, was doubtless only a name for Christianity.

Such were the materials out of which the Roman community of Christians was composed. With the exception of the faithful who came from the "household of Cæsar," the same elements made up the communities of the Church of the first days in those other important centres we hear of in the "Acts," Corinth, Ephesus, Antioch, and other less populous cities, such as Philippi, Thessalonica, Colosse. But the community of Rome in the year 62–3 was undoubtedly the largest and most influential. There the two Apostles who, during the thirty years which followed the Ascension and the miracle of Pentecost, occupy unquestionably the first place in the story of the Church, for a considerable time had resided and had taught. There Christianity had evidently made a firm lodgment, and counted its adherents probably by thousands.

Apart from the hostility of some of the Jews, who, as we have said, had in the capital a large and powerful colony numbering at least some thirty thousand—probably many more—the Christian sect practised its simple rites, and quietly multiplied its converts without opposition. The Imperial Government, while quite aware of their existence, chose to regard them as a Jewish sect, and the Jewish religion was at the time, we know, legally recognised by the Roman power.

CHAPTER II.

NERO.

SECTION I.—THE PERSECUTION OF NERO.

At this time, A.D. 62–3, the reigning Emperor was the infamous Nero, one of the strangest and most incomprehensible tyrants who has ever occupied a perfectly irresponsible position of well nigh boundless authority. The pitiful historian, in attempting the impossible task of explaining the growth and development of the character of this inhuman master of the world, dwells on the foolish partiality of his evil mother, who through a series of bloody intrigues gained at last the Imperial purple for her beautiful boy.*

This mother, Agrippina, is painted by Tacitus in the darkest colours, as a woman of daring schemes, of reckless cruelty, a princess who suffered no scruple ever to stand in the way of her merciless and shameless intrigues. Nero was but seventeen years old when, thanks to her successful plotting, he became the uncontrolled master of the world. Bent on selfish pleasure, he regarded his mighty empire as existing only to supply material for his evil passions. As years passed he grew more cruel, more vain. In the gratification of his passions and lusts he spared none; his mother, his wife, his intimate friends and companions, some of them the noblest by birth and fortune of the Roman patricians, were all in turn murdered by his orders. To his disordered fancy, the circus, with its games—games, many of them of the most

* The early busts of Nero show how different he was before vice and indulgence changed his beautiful features into the heavy, lowering face of the later portraits with which we are now familiar.

degraded character, cruel, bloody, pandering to the lowest passions of the people—were the centre of Roman life. The whole world he looked on as only existing to minister to the evil pleasures of Rome. For several years he was adored by the mixed crowds of various nationalities which composed the people of the Queen City; these irresponsible masses rejoiced in the wicked tyrant who from day to day amused them by the strange and wonderful spectacles of the circus and the amphitheatre. The populace loved him, the soldiers of the all-powerful Prætorian guard, whom he flattered, bribed, and cajoled, for a long period supported and upheld him. For his treachery, cruelty, and faithlessness affected the mercenary soldiers and the populace but little. It was only the great, the rich, the noble who trembled for their lives. The irresponsible mass of the people, the hireling Prætorian guards, delighted in a master who made their lives a perpetual holiday, who amused them with spectacles that in the world had never been matched before, so brilliant, so attractive, but of a character calculated only to debase and to lower the ignorant crowds who thronged the vast theatres where the marvellous and awful games were played. Often as many as fifty thousand, or even more, of this degraded populace would assemble in one of the great circus buildings to look, hour after hour, on scenes where cruelty, obscenity, and vice were idealised; at times the lord of the Romans deigned to join in the shameful sports, as charioteer, as singer, as buffoon, and would receive with gratification the noisy and tumultuous applause of the delighted thousands who hailed him as Emperor, and even worshipped him as divine.

Under Nero the whole tone of Roman society, from its apex down to the lowest ranks, was corrupted. The terms honour, truth, loyalty, purity, patriotism lost their signification. It was the glorification of shame and dishonour. It was only in the last years of his wicked reign, when the enormous power of the Prætorian Præfecture was entrusted to Tigellinus, one of the wickedest of the human race—after mother, wife, and well nigh all his friends had been murdered; when the vast treasures of the Imperial family had

been heedlessly squandered, and darker and ever darker expedients to replenish an exhausted exchequer were resorted to;—that the cup of wickedness of the Emperor Nero was filled, the legions of the provinces revolted, and the tyrant found himself, even in the Rome which he had so basely flattered and corrupted, without a friend. Then the end came, and Nero escaped the penalty of his nameless crimes by self-murder; but even the supreme hour of the infamous Emperor was marred by cowardice and unmanly fear.*

It was in the July of the year 64, a memorable date never forgotten, that the terrible fire broke out which reduced more than half of Rome to ashes; it began among the shops filled with wares, which easily fell a prey to the flames, located in the immediate neighbourhood of the great circus hard by the Palatine Hill. For six days and seven nights the fire raged; whole districts filled with the wooden houses of the poorer inhabitants of the city were swept away; but besides these, numberless palaces and important buildings were consumed.

Of the fourteen regions of Old Rome, four only remained uninjured by the flames. Three were utterly destroyed, while the other seven were filled with wreckage, with the blackened walls of houses which had been burnt; but the irreparable loss to the Roman people after all was the utter destruction of those more precious monuments of their past glorious history, on which every true Roman was accustomed to gaze with patriotic veneration. The cruel flames

* Renan in his *Antichrist* (chap. vi.) gives a vivid epigrammatic description of Nero: "Qu'on se figure un mélange de fou, de jocrisse et d'acteur, revêtu de la toute puissance, et chargé de gouverner le monde. Il n'avait pas la noire méchanceté de Domitian, ce n'était pas non plus un extravagant comme Caligule: c'était . . . un Empereur d'opéra, un mélomane tremblant devant le parterre et le faisant trembler . . . ces ridicules parurent d'abord chez Neron assez inoffensifs, le singe s'observa quelque temps, et garda la pose qu'on lui avait apprise: la cruauté ne se déclara chez lui qu'après la mort d'Agrippine, elle l'envahit bien vîte toute entier. Chaque année maintenant est marquée par ses crimes . . . Neron proclame chaque jour que toute vertu est un mensonge, que le galant homme est celui qui est franc, et qui avoue sa complète impudeur, que le galant homme est celui qui sait abuser de tout, tout perdre, tout depenser. Un homme vertueux est pour lui un hypocrite . . . ce fut un monstre."

spared few indeed of these. When the fire gradually, after the dread week, died away, only blackened, shapeless ruins stood on the immemorial sites of the Temple of Luna, the work of Servius Tullius, the Ara Maxima, which the Arcadian Evander had raised in honour of Hercules, the ancient Temple of Jupiter Stator, originally built after the vow of Romulus; the little royal home of Numa Pompilius, the houses of the ancient captains and generals, adorned with the spoils of conquered peoples, indeed well nigh all that the reverent love of the great people held dear and precious, had disappeared in this awful calamity. Such a loss was simply irreparable. Rome might be rebuilt on a grand scale, but the old Rome of the kings and the Republic was gone for ever.

The darkest suspicions were entertained as to the mysterious origin of this overwhelming calamity. Men's thoughts naturally were turned to the half insane master of the Roman world; was he not the author of the tremendous fire? It was known that he had for a long time viewed with dislike the tortuous, narrow streets, the piles of squalid, ancient buildings which formed so large a portion of the metropolis of the Empire; that he had formed plans of a great reconstruction, on a vastly enlarged scale, of the mighty capital; that he had dreamed of the new, enormous palace surrounded by immense gardens and pleasaunces, which soon arose under the historic name of "Nero's Golden House." Had not the evil dreamer, who exercised such irresponsible power in the Roman world, chosen this method, sudden, sharp, and swift, of clearing away old Rome, and thus making room for the carrying out of his grandiose conceptions of the new capital of the world? The truth of this will never be known. Serious historians chronicle the suspicions which filled men's minds; they tell us how the marvellous popularity which the wicked Emperor had hitherto enjoyed among the masses of the people was gravely shaken by the tremendous calamity of which he was more than suspected to have been the author. All kinds of sinister rumours were in the air; it was said no stringent and effective measures had been

adopted by the Government to stay the progress of the flames. Men even said that the Emperor's slaves had been detected with torches and inflammable material helping to spread the fire. The only plea that the friends of Nero were able to advance when that dark accusation gathered strength and force was that when the fire broke out the Emperor was at Antium, far away from Rome, and that he only arrived on the scene of desolation on the third day of the great fire.

At all events, when all was over Nero found himself generally suspected as the author of the tremendous national calamity. It was in vain that he provided temporary dwellings for the tens of thousands of the homeless and ruined poor: that he threw open the Campus Martius and even his own vast gardens for them, erecting temporary shelter for them to lodge in, supplying these homeless ones at a nominal cost with food. All these measures were of no avail—the Emperor, so lately the idol of the masses, as we have said, found himself at once unpopular, even hated, as the contriver of the awful crime.

It was then that the dark mind of Nero conceived the idea of diverting the suspicions of the people from himself, and of throwing the burden of the crime upon others who would be powerless to defend themselves. His police pretended that they had discovered that *the Christian sect* had fired Rome.

What now were his reasons for fixing upon this harmless, innocent, comparatively speaking little known group of Christians as his scapegoat? What induced the bloody, half-insane tyrant to choose out the poor Christian community for his shameful, cowardly purpose, and to accuse such a loyal, quiet, peace-loving company of the awful crime which had resulted in the destruction of more than half the metropolis of the world? What had *they* done to excite his wrath? Never a word had been uttered by the leaders of the Christian sect which could be construed into treason against himself or even into discontent with the Imperial Government. For the Christian sect all through the ages of

NERO.

From a Bust found at Athens, now in the British Museum.

persecution were not only a peace-loving body — they remained ever among the most loyal subjects of the Pagan Emperor who proscribed the religion they loved better than life, and who allowed them to be done to death unless they chose to purchase life by denying the "Name" they believed in with so intense a faith. From the days of Nero in the 'sixties to the days of Diocletian, when the sands of the third century were fast running out, the loyalty of the Christians was never called in question. In their ranks no conspirator against the laws and Government of the Empire was ever known to exist.

It was so from the first. In what we may term the State papers, which contain undoubtedly the official pronouncements of the honoured chiefs of the earliest Christian communities—Peter, Paul, and John—we find the most solemn charges to the believers under all circumstances to maintain a strict, unswerving loyalty to the Cæsar, and to the Roman Government of which the Cæsar was the representative. The charges are even peremptory in their directness. So Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome from Corinth in the year 58:

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers . . . the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil . . . He beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefor ye must needs be subject . . . also for conscience' sake . . . Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."—*Romans* xiii. 1-7.

In truth a very noble definition of authority, a sublime ideal of loyalty, was thus set before the little congregations of the rising sect. So Peter, too, in his first epistle—an epistle received with respect and reverence in all the Churches as an inspired pronouncement from the very beginning—writing from Rome, under the shadow of that fearful persecution we are going to relate in detail, repeats with even greater emphasis his brother Paul's directions:

"Dearly beloved . . . submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto

governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well: for so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, but not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."—1 *S. Peter* ii. 13–17.

What Paul wrote in a period of comparative quietness in A.D. 58, Peter repeats a few years later, *circa* A.D. 65–6, in the days of one of the most cruel persecutions that perhaps ever weighed upon the Church; while John, who, after Peter and Paul had passed away, somewhere about A.D. 67–8, was regarded by the Church as its most honoured and influential leader, in his Gospel—probably put out in the latter years of the first century—when giving the account of the trial of Jesus Christ before Pilate, quotes one of the sayings of his Master addressed to the Roman magistrate; in which the Lord clearly states that the power of the Imperial ruler was given him from above—that is, from God (S. John xix. 11); thus emphasising, some quarter of a century later, the words and charges of Peter and Paul, ordering the Christian communities to be loyal and obedient to the constituted powers of the State, and to the Sovereign who wielded this authority as the chief officer of the State, because such powers were given "from above."

This spirit of unswerving obedience and perfect loyalty which we find in the official writings of Peter, Paul, and John, lived in the Church all through the three centuries of the oppression. It was ever its guiding principle of action in all its relations with the Empire.

Thus we come again to the question: What then provoked the first cruel persecution? What determined Nero to proscribe so loyal and harmless a sect? It has been suggested, nor is the suggestion by any means baseless, that the proscription of the Christians by the Emperor was in consequence of a dark accusation thrown out by the Jews. Not improbably the first idea of Nero and his advisers was to fasten the crime upon the Jews themselves. Their loyalty to the State was ever questionable. The condition of the

Hebrew mother-country was just then restless and uneasy. The threatenings of the great revolt, which culminated in the Jewish war and destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, were already plainly manifest. It is indeed highly probable that to avert the suspicion of many a Roman who too readily looked on the Jewish colony as the authors of the great calamity, the Jews themselves suggested to the Emperor that in the hated Christian sect he would find the true authors of the fire of Rome. Nor were the Jews without friends at Court, who were able and willing to press home the false and evil accusation. Poppæa, the beautiful Empress, at that time high in the favour of Nero, who had taken her from her husband, was deeply interested in the Hebrew religion; some even think she had absolutely joined the ranks of the chosen people and had become a "Proselyte of the Gate." Other friends, too, of the Jews, besides the profligate Empress, were in the inner circle of Nero.

But still the historian of Christianity is loth to charge the Jews with this crime of a false accusation, which led in the case of the Christians to such fearful consequences. It is possible, certainly, that other reasons may have induced Nero to turn his thoughts to the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. In the year 64 it is clear that they were no secret or inconsiderable community, and it is likely that they were already looked upon by many of the superstitious and jealous Romans with dislike and even with hatred. Christianity was beginning to make rapid progress. Its votaries, while loyal to the State and the magistrates, made no secret of their dislike and contempt for the Deities whose shrines were the object of such intense veneration. These considerations would at least suggest to Nero that in this sect he would easily find an object of popular hatred.

The Imperial order went forth. It was about the middle of the year 64. The first martyrology of the Church was written by no fervid Christian, by no ecclesiastical historian living years after the dread events happened of which he was the perhaps partial chronicler; it was compiled by no admirer of martyrdom, too anxious it may be to draw a great

lesson, and to point to a noble example of faith and fortitude. The teller of the story of the martyrs of Nero was a Roman, a Pagan, a scholarly and eloquent admirer of Rome and of her immemorial traditions; and withal one who lived only a little more than half a century after the date at which the memorable events he related took place. No one certainly can suspect the Pagan historian Tacitus of exaggeration. He tells the story with his usual cold brilliancy of style; but no one can charge him with undue partiality for the sufferers whose fate he so graphically depicts. In his eyes the hapless victims deserved the severest punishment, though even for them, guilty though they were, the punishment meted out was perhaps too cruel, the sufferings excessive. They excited pity, Tacitus tells us; the horrors which accompanied their punishment gave rise to a suspicion that this great multitude of condemned ones who died thus were rather the victims of the cruelty of an individual (Nero) than merely ordinary offenders against the State.*

The result of Nero's proscription was the immediate arrest of many prominent and well-known members of the Christian community. These, Tacitus says, *confessed;* but their confession was evidently *not* their share in the burning of Rome, *not* that they had been incendiaries, but simply that they were Christians; for the huge multitude of Christians (*ingens multitudo*) who, as the investigation of the Government broadened out, were subsequently arrested, were presently convicted on the general charge, not of firing the great city, but simply of "hatred against mankind."† The procedure seems to have been terribly simple. Nero, intensely anxious to divert from himself the indignation which it was evident had been universally aroused against him as the author of the conflagration which had destroyed a great part of Rome, and particularly its cherished monuments of the past, used for his purpose the popular dislike of the new sect of Christians.

* "Unde quanquam adversus sontes et novissima exempla meritos miseratio oriebatur, tanquam non utilitate publica sed in sævitiam unius absumerentur." —Tacitus: *Ann.*, xv. 44.

† "Odio humani generis convicti sunt."—Tacitus: *Ann.*, xv. 44.

Many were sought out. They were well known and easily found. They at once confessed that they were Christians. Then on the information elicited at their trial, perhaps too on the evidence of writings and papers seized in their houses, many more were involved in their fate. All pretence of their connection with the late tremendous fire was probably soon abandoned, and they were condemned simply on their confession that they were Christians. Their punishment was turned into an amusement to divert the general populace, and thus Nero thought he would regain some of his lost popularity. His fiendish desire no doubt was partly successful. For the games were on a stupendous scale, and were accompanied by scenes hitherto unknown even to the pleasure-loving crowd accustomed to applaud these cruel and degrading spectacles.

The scene of this theatrical massacre was the Imperial garden on the other side of the Tiber, on the Vatican Hill. The spot is well known, and is now occupied by the mighty pile of St. Peter's, the Vatican Palace, and the great square immediately in front of the chief Church of Christendom and the vast palace of the Popes.

Whether the awful and bloody drama in the Vatican Gardens lasted more than one day is not made certain by the brief though graphic picture of Tacitus.* Enormous destruction of human life, we know from other "amphitheatre" recitals, could be compassed in a long day's proceedings, especially under an Emperor like Nero, who had all the resources of the Roman world at his disposition.

If the whole were comprised, as seems probable, in one day's long performance, it is clear that the hideous games were prolonged far into night. It began with a long and pathetic procession of the condemned, made up of all ages

* Suetonius, a contemporary of Tacitus, gives too a brief account of the great persecution; Clement of Rome, end of Cent. I., Tertullian, end of Cent. II., among other Christian writers, refer to it; but by far the most graphic picture of the awful sufferings of the Christians at Rome in the Neronic persecution is that painted by Tacitus. He is emphatically, enemy though he was of the Christian sect, the first martyrologist, and his testimony, coming from such a quarter, is especially conclusive.

and of both sexes, round the great amphitheatre erected and enlarged for the show. This was followed by the "Venatio" or hunting scene, a spectacle in which wild beasts—lions, tigers, wild bulls, wolves, and dogs—bore a prominent part: to add to the horrors of the scene, some of the victims would be partially clothed in skins of different animals, to whet the ferocity of the dogs and other beasts specially trained for fighting. By a strange refinement of cruelty, the Roman mob in the course of these savage games was regaled with some dramatic spectacles, the scenery of which was drawn from well-known mythological legends. A Hercules was carried to the funeral pyre and then burnt alive, amid the frantic applause of the spectators; an Icarus was made to fly, and then fall and be dashed to death. The hand of a Mutius Scævola was held in the burning brazier till the limb of the tortured sufferer was consumed; a Pasiphae was gored by a bull; a Prometheus was chained to the rock where he underwent his terrible punishment; a Marsyas was flayed alive; an Ixion was tortured on his wheel; an Actæon was actually torn by his dogs. This dread realism formed part of the cruel amusements of Nero's show in his Vatican Gardens. To these pieces of real sorrowful tragedy were added on this occasion other scenes out of the legendary history of the past, so degrading and demoralising that the historian must pass them over in silence.* At last, night threw its pitiful veil over the bloodstained arena. During the long hours of the Italian summer day, the fierce, excited multitude, numbering many thousands, had been gazing on these unheard-of tortures, and watching the dying agonies of the crowd of the first Christian martyrs of various ranks and orders, slaves and freedmen, soldiers and traders, mostly poor folk, but here and there one of higher rank and standing,

* Clement of Rome, writing some few years after the "dread show," parts of which he probably witnessed, tells us how "unto these men of holy lives was gathered a vast multitude of the elect, who, through many indignities and tortures, being the victims of jealousy, set a brave example among ourselves . . . Women being persecuted after they had suffered cruel and unholy insults . . . safely reached the goal in the race of Faith, and received a noble reward, feeble though they were in body."—S. Clement of Rome: *Epist. to Cor.* 6.

Photo. By permission of Messrs. Goupil & Co.

A DERNIÈRE PRIÈRE.

From the Painting by J. L. Gerome.

some old men, others in the prime and vigour of life, tender girls, women of varied ages, some even children in years; but all, as it seems, enduring the nameless agonies with calm, brave patience, asking for no mercy, offering no recantation of their faith in the Name for which they were suffering, some even smiling in their pain. . . . But the night which followed that August day, so memorable in the Christian annals, brought in its train no merciful silence into the grim garden of death and horror, where Nero was entertaining his Roman people. The games still went on, but the spectacle on which the crowds were invited to gaze was changed. The broad arena was strewn with fresh sand, blotting out the dark stains left by the long-drawn-out tragedy of the day. Perfumes were plentifully sprinkled to freshen the heavy, blood-poisoned atmosphere, and the arena was lit up for the concluding acts of the Imperial drama. Here, however, the Emperor had devised a new and original spectacle to delight the fierce crowd whose applause he so loved to evoke. The principal amusement of the night was to consist in chariot racing, in which the Lord of the World himself was to bear a leading part; for Nero was a skilful and courageous charioteer, and it was his habit now and again to show himself in this guise to his people, coming down from his gold and ivory throne into the arena. And as the torches, plentifully scattered on that vast arena, gradually flamed up, the bystanders were amazed, and it seems from Tacitus' words, were even struck with horror at the sight, and for the first time in that day of death and carnage, pitied as they gazed; *for every torch was a human being*, impaled or crucified on a sharp stake or cross. The "torches" quickly flared up, for every human form was swathed in a tunic steeped in oil, or in some inflammable liquid.

Such was the ghastly illumination of the arena on that never-to-be-forgotten night of the late summer of the year 64, when the chariot races were run. It was a novel form of lighting the amphitheatre, and we have no record that it was ever repeated.* It seems to have been too shocking

* This manner of burning criminals alive, thus robed in what was termed the "tunica molesta," was not uncommon, but only on this one memorable occasion were the living torches used as the illuminations.

even for that demoralised and bloodthirsty populace, whose chief delight, whose supreme pleasure, was in those sanguinary and impure spectacles so often provided for the people by the Emperors of the first, second, and third centuries.*

The number of victims sacrificed in this persecution of Nero is uncertain; it was undoubtedly very large. Clement of Rome, writing before the close of the first century, describes them as "a great multitude." Tacitus, a very few years later, uses a similar expression (*ingens multitudo*); and when it is remembered what vast numbers on different occasions were† devoted to the public butcheries in the arena for the amusement of the populace, it may be assumed without exaggeration that the Christian victims who were massacred at that ghastly festival we have been describing probably numbered many hundreds.

SECTION II.—EFFECTS OF THE PERSECUTION OF NERO.

Nero's games in the Vatican Gardens, of A.D. 64, evidently left a profound impression on the Roman world. The spectators were used to these pitiless exhibitions. The crowds who thronged the amphitheatre had often seen men die; but they had never seen men die like those Christians who, in scenes of unexampled horror, by the sword, under the teeth of wild beasts, or in the flames, passed to their rest. The memory of the scene evidently was still fresh in Seneca's mind when, a year or two later, he wrote to Lucilius urging him to bear up bravely under sickness and bodily pain.

* These "human" torches seem to have burned for a considerable time, before they slowly flickered out, so Juvenal describes them:

> . . . "Taeda . . .
> Qua stantes ardent, qui fixo guttore fumant,
> Et latum media sulcum diducit arena."

Satires 1, 155–157. Compare, too, for reference to this persecution, Clem., *Ad. Cor.*, 6; Tertullian, *Apol.* 5 (when he refers to official records), also *Ad. Nat.*, vii. 60–1, and *Scorpiace*, 15; Eusebius, *H. E.*, 11, 22, 25, etc.; Lactantius, *De Morte Persecutorum*, 2; Tacitus, *Ann.*, xv. 44; Suetonius, *Nero*, 16.

† In the bloody naval games given by the Emperor Claudius in A.D. 52 on Lake Fucinus, as many as nineteen thousand condemned criminals fought together.—Tacitus, *Ann.*, xii. 56.

Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome.

THE FLAVIAN AMPHITHEATRE, OR COLOSSEUM

Completed by Titus in A.D. 80. There were seats for forty or fifty thousand spectators, and a total accommodation probably for 100,000 persons.

"What," he wrote, "are your sufferings compared with the flames, and the cross, and the rack, and the nameless tortures that I have watched men endure, without shrinking, without a complaint, without a groan? And as if all this quiet endurance and brave patience was not sufficient, I have seen these victims even smile in their great agony."*

We have dwelt in some detail on this first memorable "wholesale" martyrdom under Nero, for it was the commencement of a new era in the Christian life. Up to A.D. 64 the profession of the new faith was made in quiet and, comparatively speaking, in secret. Up to that date, throughout the Empire, in the eyes of all magistrates, the disciples of Jesus were more or less included among the Jews, who enjoyed toleration, and in some quarters even favour. But henceforth the Christians occupied a new position. They belonged from this time to a proscribed sect. Hitherto their existence had, indeed, been known to many, including, of course, the police and magistrates; but, politically speaking, it had been ignored. Now, however, the action of Nero, when he sought for victims on whom he could cast the odium of being the incendiaries on the occasion of the great fire which had desolated Rome, completely changed the situation. As Christian writers universally affirm, it was the wicked Emperor who first dragged the Christian body into publicity, who first drew the sword of the State against them, who gave the signal for the long drawn-out persecution of Christians which lasted about two centuries and a half. During that time there were no doubt intervals, even long intervals, when persecution slept; but only to awaken to fresh violence.

From the day of the Neronic games of A.D. 64, the sword drawn by Nero ever hung over the heads of the condemned sect until the hour of the Christians' triumph some two hundred and fifty years later, when the peace of the Church was at last guaranteed by the Edict of Constantine, A.D. 313.

We will rapidly sum up the position of Christians in the Empire.

* Seneca: *Ep.* 78. There is little doubt but that Seneca was referring to the scenes he had witnessed in the Vatican Gardens, A.D. 64.

Until A.D. 64 the Roman officials had, on the whole, treated the Christians with indifference, or even with favour mingled with contempt, as exemplified several times in the treatment of Paul when brought before the Imperial magistrates. If they acted harshly, either they were influenced by the enmity of influential Jews or they punished the Christians as being connected with disturbances which were due in part to their presence and actions.

But in A.D. 64, a year after Paul's acquittal from the charges brought against him as related in the "Acts," Nero began a bitter persecution against the sect for the sake of diverting popular attention in the matter of the burning of Rome. It was soon seen that they had had no real hand in that terrible crime; but in substituting the charge of "hatred for mankind" the Emperor in fact introduced the principle of punishing Christians for their Christianity. His example became inevitably the guide for all officials, in the provinces as well as at Rome.* The general persecution of Christians was established as a *permanent police measure*, directed against a sect considered dangerous to the public safety. No edict or formal law at that early period was passed, but the precedent of Rome was quoted in every case when a Christian was accused. The attitude of the State towards the sect gradually, in the course of a few years, became settled. No proof of definite crimes committed by the Christians was required. An acknowledgment of the "Name" alone sufficed for condemnation; as is shown by the well-known correspondence of the proconsul Pliny with the Emperor Trajan, which we shall presently again refer to in detail, some fifty years later in A.D. 112. "The action of Nero inaugurated a new era in the relation of the Empire towards Christianity, says Suetonius; and Tacitus does not disagree."*

On the other hand, the action of Nero among the Christians themselves had a far-reaching effect. It gave them a new and mighty power, or rather it revealed to them what a

* Professor Ramsay: *The Church in the Roman Empire before* A.D. 170, chap. xi.

power they possessed—an absolute fearlessness of death. Possibly this was unsuspected before the Neronic persecution. A historian* of rare skill, no friend indeed to the religion of Jesus, does not hesitate to style the day of Nero's bloody games in his gardens of the Vatican "the most solemn day in the Christian story after the Crucifixion on Golgotha." The expression is a rhetorical one, but though exaggerated, it has a basis of truth. With the exception of the prominent and militant leaders, Stephen and S. James, who were victims of Jewish jealousy, we have no records of Christians during the first thirty years which followed the Resurrection and Ascension of the Founder of the religion laying down their lives for the Name; nor does it appear that in any of the communities of the followers of Jesus was the dread alternative of death or denial ever put before them in that first period.

The Neronic persecution presenting that alternative must have come upon the Roman Church, a community probably numbering several thousands, with startling suddenness; revealing what apparently was before unknown or at least ignored—the repulsion with which the Christians were generally regarded by the great world lying outside the little circle who happened to know something about them. They were charged, says Tacitus, with "hatred of the world" (*i.e.* the Roman world), *odium humani generis;* in Professor Ramsay's words, "with being enemies to the customs and laws which regulated civilised (*i.e.* Roman) society. The Christians, so said their enemies, were bent on destroying civilisation, and civilisation must in self-defence destroy them." †

Thus put to the test, the events of the summer of the year 64 showed what was the secret of the Christians' strength, demonstrated the intensity of their convictions; young and old, slave and free, the trader and the patrician-born alike, proved that while ready and willing to live quiet, homely lives as loyal true citizens, as faithful servants of the Emperor, to them "to depart [to die] and

* Renan: *Histoire des origines de Christianisme.*—"L'Antechrist," chap. vii.

† Professor Ramsay: *The Church in the Roman Empire*, chap. xi.

to be with Christ was far better." In the Vatican Gardens of Nero began, as it has been well said, that marvellous epic of "martyrdom" which amazed and confounded a sceptical though superstitious world for two centuries and a half.

Out of this passion for martyrdom sprang the ennobling enfranchisement of woman, and the elevation of the vast slave class from the position of hopeless and demoralising degradation. For in the many and striking scenes of martyrdom, the woman and the slave played again and again an heroic and even a leading part. What had taken place at Rome when Nero was Emperor was repeated on a smaller scale before less distinguished and less numerous audiences again and again in famous provincial centres, such as Smyrna, Carthage, Lyons, Caesarea, now in groups, now singly. When the supreme hour of trial struck and the Christian had to choose between death and life —life being the guerdon offered for the simple renouncement of Christ—very rarely indeed was hesitation shown; the guerdon was at once rejected. The contempt of Christians for death puzzled, irritated, disturbed the Pagan writers and philosophers as much as the magistrates. They were utterly at a loss to comprehend the secret power which inspired this wonderful sect. As much as possible they avoid all allusion to Christians; whenever a mention of them occurs irritation and surprise are plainly visible. The one reference* made to them by the great Emperor Marcus Aurelius is a curt and angry allusion to their contempt for death. This strange readiness to die for their belief was the characteristic feature which especially struck the Roman mind. So ready, so eager were the Christians to give up dear life that we find that their great teachers were now and again obliged to curb and even to restrain what had positively become a too passionate desire for martyrdom.

The example of the first martyrs of Rome was followed with a curious persistency, alike in Syria and Asia, in Africa and in Gaul, whenever, indeed, in the course of these two

* Marcus Aurelius: *Meditations*, xi. 3.

centuries and a half they were challenged to deny the "Name." The number of waverers was comparatively small.

The first persecution, begun at Rome with the Vatican Games of 64, but soon, as we have noted, spreading through the Provinces, continued to press heavily on the Christian congregations until the death of the Emperor Nero* in 68.

The martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul, according to an immemorial tradition, took place in the year 67–8. S. Peter probably, as we have seen, was at Rome in A.D. 64, but was not one of the victims on that occasion. S. Paul was absent from the capital in 64, but returned a year or two later, probably with the idea of gathering together and strengthening the scattered and decimated Roman congregations. Tradition speaks of the two great Christian leaders perishing at or about the same date, before the tyrant's downfall and death in 68.

Two of the most ancient Christian documents, which by the consent of the whole Christian Church have been placed in the canon of inspired books, were probably written under the shadow of this first great calamity. They contain many and undoubted references to persecution. These documents are the First Epistle of S. Peter and the Apocalypse of S. John (the Revelation). The letter of S. Peter, dated from Rome (for well nigh all scholars are now agreed that under the mystic name of Babylon which occurs in the salutation at the close of the letter—1 Peter v. 13—Rome is signified), is a writing addressed to Oriental Christians, bidding them take courage in view of the grave trials which lay immediately before them. No book, with the exception of the Apocalypse of S. John, is so evidently marked with references to trial and suffering as is this First Epistle of S. Peter. And the references are evidently to no solitary burst of persecution, however terrible, but to a systematic proscription, to which all Christians dwelling in different parts of the Roman world were liable.

* "Nero, Romæ Christianos suppliciis ac mortibus affecit ac per omnes provincias pari persecutione excruciari imperavit." Orosius, *Adv. Pag. Hist.*, vii. 5; cf. also Tertullian, *Apol.*, 5; and Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.*, 11, and see too Suetonius, *Nero*, 16.

The Apocalypse of S. John was also evidently written under the dark shadow of persecution. The only question is whether the persecution referred to therein is that suffered by the Church in the days of Nero, or that endured some twenty years later under Domitian. If the first, then the writing would date from *circa* A.D. 68; if the second, the Apocalypse would have been put out *circa* A.D. 90. The witness of Irenæus, who wrote about a century later, *circa* A.D. 170–80, and who gives the later date, is of course a very weighty one. The general, though not the universal, consensus of modern scholars, however, prefers the earlier date. In the words of Professor Sanday: "Apart from details, I question if any other date fits so well with the conditions implied in the Apocalypse as that between the death of Nero (A.D. 68) and the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70); on all hands there were wars and rumours of wars. . . . It might well seem as if the crash of empires was a fit prelude to the crash of a world. Never was the expectation of the approaching end so keen, never were men's minds so highly strung . . . there were no such tremendous issues, no such clash of opposing forces, no such intense expectation of the end under Domitian. The background seems inadequate."

With strange pathos, John the beloved, the survivor of the Apostolic band, in his inspired utterance expresses the mind of the Christian Church after the first terrible persecution. The fiery trial had done its work; henceforth we see the Church braced up, ready to suffer and to be strong, in the face of the most deadly persecution. "How grandly over all echoes the voice which borrows its tones straight from the prophets of the older covenant: 'Righteous art Thou, which art and which wast, Thou Holy One, because Thou didst thus judge . . . yea, O Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.' Whenever it is, Christians are being persecuted; the Empire is making its hand heavy upon them; they are as incapable of offering resistance as a child. And yet the prophet's gaze hardly seems to dwell upon the sufferings of himself and his people. They are a school of steadfastness and courage. 'Be thou faithful unto death, and

I will give thee the crown of life,' is the chief moral to be drawn from them. But the prophet looks away beyond the persecution to the fate of the persecutors. . . . The central feature of the Apocalypse is its intense longing for the advent of Christ and His kingdom, with its confident assertion of the ultimate victory of good over evil, and of the dawning of a state of blissful perfection where sorrow and sighing shall flee away."*

The confusion and disorder which followed immediately upon Nero's death were speedily closed by the accession of Vespasian to supreme power.

* Professor Sanday: Bampton Lecture VII.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHURCH IN ROME AFTER NERO.

WHAT now was the condition of the Christian Church during the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, that is, from A.D. 68 (the date of the death of Nero) to A.D. 81? That the Christians were harried by a persecution under Domitian, who succeeded his brother Titus as Emperor in the year 81, reigning until A.D. 96, is universally accepted as certain; whereas Christian* and profane historians alike, as a rule, represent the period covered by the reigns of Vespasian and Titus as a time of stillness for the harassed religion. Recent investigations, however, point to a somewhat different conclusion.

An important passage from Sulpicius Severus, a Christian writer of the fourth century, has, in late years, been critically examined, with the result that the passage in question is judged to have been based upon an extract from a lost writing of Tacitus. The words of Sulpicius Severus tell us of a Council of War held by Titus after the capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In the council Titus is reported to have expressed the view that the Temple of Jerusalem ought to be destroyed in order that the religions of the Jews and of the Christians might be more completely extirpated. The Christians had arisen from amongst the Jews, and when the root was torn up the stem would easily be destroyed.† This points to the policy of stern repression, inaugurated by Nero, being continued for political reasons

* Compare, however, as an exception here, Hilary of Poitiers (*circa* middle of fourth century), who ranks Vespasian, as a persecutor of the Church, "between Nero and Decius," *Contra Arianos.*

† Compare Professor Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, chap. xii.

by Titus and his father Vespasian. There is a passage of Suetonius (Vespasian 15) where it is said that "Vespasian never in the death of anyone [took pleasure, and in the case of] merited punishment he wept and even groaned."* The passage is mutilated, but it seems probable that the reference here is to punishments which, according to the precedent of Nero, were inflicted upon Christians. Such men as Vespasian and Titus would hate to inflict cruel punishment upon quiet subjects of the Empire, as they were conscious the Christians were; but it had been already decided by the Government to treat the Christian sect as enemies of the public weal, and in this decision the great princes of the Flavian House concurred, agreeing in the conclusion come to in the reign of Nero that the peculiar tenets of the Christians were inimical to the well-being of the State as then constituted.

Reasoning further from the famous correspondence of the Emperor Trajan with the proconsul Pliny, from which we gather that a practically fixed procedure had long been established in the treatment of the new sect of Christians, it would seem on the whole unlikely that the Christians enjoyed any period of real quietness directly after the death of Nero. That there was no active proscription is probable, but that they practised their religion under circumstances of difficulty and danger is almost certain. In Domitian's day, however, the persecution became once more active, and we shall have to chronicle amidst the crowd of unknown sufferers the fate of certain notable victims who were subjected to the severest penalties, and in some cases were even put to death.

To return to the important Church in Rome, which had suffered so grievously at the cruel hands of Nero. On the death of the two Apostles Peter and Paul, *circa* A.D. 67–68, the government of the Church of the capital of the

* "Neque cæde cujusquam unquam [lætatus est et] justis suppliciis inlacrimavit, etiam et ingemuit." "Some" (says Professor Ramsay) "fill the obvious gap with the single word *lætatus*, but *neque* at the beginning looks forward necessarily to *et* following." *The Church in the Roman Empire*, xii. 2.

Empire came into the hands of Linus, the same probably who sends greeting to Timothy on the eve of S. Paul's martyrdom (2 Tim. iv. 21). Of this episcopate of Linus we know nothing; even tradition is almost silent here. The "Liber Pontificalis," in which many ancient and some fairly trustworthy traditions are embodied, only tells us that this Linus issued a direction for women to appear in church with their heads covered. From the lists of the early Roman succession we find that Linus presided over the Roman community some twelve years. A veil of silence, too, rests over the episcopate of his successor, Anencletus or Cletus. The duration of his rule is also given in the Eusebian Catalogue as twelve years. Clement of Rome, who followed him, lived through the reign of Domitian, in whose days the fury of persecution awoke again. Clement survived the tyrant, dying in the third year of the reign of the Emperor Trajan, the year that closed the first century. Ecclesiastical writers speak of the proscription of Christians in the reign of Domitian as the second persecution of the Church. Although the policy of the Empire in the days of Vespasian and Titus, and in the early period of Domitian's reign, had been adverse to the existence of Christianity, the practical rule of action was, that the officials of the Government should not in any case seek out these "religious" offenders. It was true that a Christian was a criminal who deserved death, but the magistrate might shut his eyes to his existence until some notorious act on the part of the Christian or the information of an officious accuser compelled him to open them.

But this unwillingness to proceed against the sect only gave them partial protection. The ill-will of an Emperor or even of a Provincial Governor at any moment might unsheathe the sword of the Law, never quite hidden in its scabbard; and the defenceless Christians would find themselves at once exposed to the severest penalties. If the Emperor was hostile, the persecution became general; if merely the Provincial Magistrate was ill-disposed to the sect, the persecution was generally confined to the district over which his authority extended.

S. PETER AND S. PAUL CROWNED BY CHRIST.

From a Design on the bottom of a glass *patera*. Attributed to the First or early Second Century.

LINUS.

From a Design on the bottom of a glass *patera* found in the Catacomb of S. Sebastian, now in the Vatican Museum. Attributed to the First or early Second Century.

This second severe attack differed in some respects from the Neronic persecution. Under Domitian there was no massacre of crowds of unresisting men and women as in the amphitheatre games of Nero. Individual Christians, some of them of the highest rank, even among the Emperor's own kinsfolk, were arrested and put to death; but, although there was no wholesale butchery, the number of sufferers in the course of the active persecution under him was very considerable. The Church was constantly harassed; no Christian was safe from the consequences of the report of an infamous informer; and, in most cases, death speedily followed the arrest. Flavius Clemens, the cousin of the Emperor, was among the victims who perished; Domitilla, his wife, among the banished. Domitilla, however, lived to return to Rome after the tyrant's death.

We possess no records which give us any details respecting the state of the Church in Rome during the period of comparative quietness between the persecutions by Nero and Domitian. The Letter of Clement, however, a little more than a quarter of a century after Nero's death, gives us important information respecting the position of the Church of the Capital; while recent archæological discoveries also throw a strong sidelight on the position of Christians at Rome, and incidental mention of individual Christians in contemporary writers assists us in our conception of the progress of the Church during that quarter of a century.

Although for the time seriously weakened by the severe measures of A.D. 64, and disheartened by the deaths of Peter and Paul, the Church in Rome gradually recovered from the calamity. It had made too firm a lodgment in the great city to be permanently injured, and it emerged from the fiery trial purified and strengthened. Its converts, too, as we have seen, were drawn from all ranks and orders; by no means was the Christian community only composed of slaves or freedmen, or of persons belonging to the plebeian trading classes. It numbered many wealthy Romans, some of them of the highest rank.

About the year 92 we find Clement occupying the position

of Bishop of the Christian community at Rome. Now, no one outside the Apostolic ranks occupies so prominent a place in early Christian story as does this Clement, who, in the various lists of the Roman succession which from the middle of the second century onwards have come down to us, generally appears as the third in succession from St. Peter. When this Clement succeeded to the government of the Roman Church, the reign of Domitian was more than half over. The duration of his episcopate is given in the lists as nine years. His death occurred, then, in the last year of the first century, when the Emperor Trajan was reigning.

Clement, without doubt, was the most prominent figure in the flourishing Church of the metropolis of the world in the age which succeeded the removal by death of Peter and of Paul; and evidently wielded an extraordinary authority in the Church, not only in Italy, but in distant countries more or less connected with Italy and with Rome. How great was the influence of the Church of Rome in other and remote centres we shall show presently.

We may put aside as mythical the various details connected with Clement which appear in the singular early romance generally known as "The Clementines." This curious religious romance dates from about the middle of the second century. Its unknown author seems to have wanted a hero for his story, and no more imposing name than that of the famous Roman bishop, who was at once a great Church administrator and a writer, could be found for his purpose. This very early work probably suggested a similar use of Clement's name to later writers.*

Dismissing these various apocryphal compositions as unhistorical, what do we know certainly about this famous Church leader? Now *Irenæus*, writing A.D. 175, or a few years later, had spent some time in the metropolis, when the memory of Clement was still fresh. He tells us ("Adv.

* Compare Bishop Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers, Clement of Rome* (vol. i., pp. 100, 101), on the authorship of the "Clementine Homilies and Recognitions," the "Epistles to Virgins," the "Second Epistle to the Corinthians," the "Apostolical Constitutions," etc.

Haer," iii. 3, 3) that the founders of the Roman Church are "the glorious Apostles Peter and Paul"; they committed it to the charge of Linus, who is mentioned in the Epistle to Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 21). The next in succession to Linus was Anencletus. After Anencletus followed Clement, "who also had seen the blessed Apostles, and had conversed with them, and had the preaching of the Apostles still ringing in his ears, and their tradition before his eyes . . . He was not alone in this, for many still remained at this time, who had been taught by the Apostles." . . . "In the time of Clement," continues Irenæus, "a feud of no small magnitude arose among the brethren in Corinth, and the Church in Rome sent a most exhaustive (ἱκανωτάτην) letter to the Corinthians, thinking to bring them to peace, and quickening their faith, and declaring the tradition which they had so lately received from the Apostle."

It is this "Letter to the Corinthians," to which Irenæus refers, which constitutes the real importance of Clement's life and work to us. There were other Bishops of Rome immediately preceding and succeeding Clement; but from none of them do we inherit a long and weighty document like this, issuing from the heart of the Church only a quarter of a century after the passing away of Peter and Paul, dating from a time when John was still living and teaching at Ephesus; a document which not only bears in itself ample proofs of its genuineness, but is testified to by ancient and trustworthy authorities in the most positive and decisive language.

That it was in the hands of *Polycarp*, Bishop of Smyrna, is perfectly clear from the long list of parallel passages, many of them copied verbatim by Polycarp from Clement, in his Epistle to the Philippians *circa* A.D. 108-10. Irenæus, *circa* A.D. 170–80, we have already quoted as referring expressly to it, ascribing to it a position of very high importance, because it records the traditional interpretation of Apostolic teaching, which was the standard of truth in the great church of Rome from the earliest times. *Dionysius* of Corinth, *circa* A.D. 170, relates how this epistle was read in church publicly

on the Lord's day. *Clement of Alexandria*, before the close of the second century, quotes this epistle frequently and with great respect. *Origen*, a few years later, quotes several passages from Clement's letter, and holds his testimony in honour. Coming down the stream of time, the historian *Eusebius*, to whose patient industry we owe so much of our knowledge of the Church of the "Age of the Persecutions," writing in the first half of the fourth century, calls Clement's epistle "great and marvellous," and dwells on its "having the testimony of antiquity to its genuineness." Besides the above, Clement is quoted by name by *Cyril of Jerusalem, circa* A.D. 347; *Basil of Cæsarea, circa* A.D. 375; *Epiphanius, circa* A.D. 375; *Jerome, circa* A.D. 375–410; and by *Rufinus, circa* A.D. 410.

So highly was this letter of Clement of Rome held in honour that it was frequently read publicly in churches other than that of Corinth, to which it was addressed. *Eusebius* tells us that it was the custom to do so in very many churches, both formerly and in his own time (*H. E.* iii. 16).

This epistle of Clement, which was so widely known and highly valued from the end of the first century onwards for more than three hundred years, is a document written in Greek. It is somewhat longer than St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and incidentally, among other and less important points, gives much information respecting the position which Rome occupied towards other Churches; upon the attitude which the Christian Church was directed to assume towards the Emperor and the Government of the Empire; and upon the fundamental doctrines which were the groundwork of the dogmatic teaching of the large and important Christian community of the capital in the last years of the first century.

And yet, highly valued and prized as was this letter of Clement the Bishop of Rome, the eminent teachers who made use of it, and the Churches who even introduced it into the public teaching of the congregation, evidently placed it on a lower and very different level from the writings of such men as Paul and Peter, whose letters at a very early period were received as absolutely authoritative.

Who, now, was this Clement who was then so widely known and honoured? Origen, who wrote in the first half of the third century, and whose profound scholarship and literary power place him very high as a witness, without any doubt identifies him with the Clement mentioned by S. Paul writing to the Philippians (iv. 3) as among the "fellow labourers whose names are in the Book of Life." This identification is adopted by the historian Eusebius, and by not a few early writers; and although modern critics consider it as somewhat precarious, all serious scholars agree in accepting the very early constant and definite tradition that he was the disciple of one or both of the great Apostles Peter and Paul, whose names are so closely connected with the foundation of the Roman Church.

Dismissing as unlikely the theory maintained by some that Clement the Bishop was identical with Flavius Clemens, the cousin of Domitian, it seems on the whole most probable that the famous Bishop was a man of Jewish descent, perhaps a freedman belonging to the household of Flavius Clemens, the Emperor's cousin, who suffered martyrdom in the course of the persecution of Domitian.

Very vivid is the light thrown upon the inner life of the Church of Rome in the last decade of the first century by the letter of the Bishop, the genuineness and authenticity of which, as we have seen, is undoubted. In the first place, it tells us what was *the position of the Church of the capital towards other Churches.* Now the object of the letter was to induce the rulers of the Church of Corinth to put an end at once to a spirit of faction and insubordination to their official rulers which had arisen lately in the community there. The danger to the well-being and prosperity of the Church was evidently very great, and the tone adopted by the Church of Rome in the letter of Clement was urgent, almost imperious. The recognition of the ascendancy of the Church of Rome* is implied in the fact, already noted, that

* The moral ascendancy of the Church (not the Bishop) of Rome, Bishop Lightfoot well considers to have been the historical foundation of the undoubted primacy of Rome, a primacy which evidently existed in primitive times.

this letter was for a long period constantly read in the public services of the Church of Corinth.

In the second place, very clearly is *the attitude adopted by Christians towards the reigning Emperor and the Government* set forward in Clement's letter.

The Christians in Rome had had experience of the first and one of the most terrible persecutions to which the followers of Jesus were ever exposed. They had then passed through a long period when the sword of proscription was ever threatening, if not actually drawn, in the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, and in the earlier years of Domitian. They had very lately gone through a renewed period of bitter trial during the latter portion of Domitian's reign. But in the letter of Clement, which accurately reflected the mind and policy of the Christian Church of the metropolis in the closing years of the first century, not an angry word is written, not a hint of resistance to the powers that be is ever whispered. After referring to the victories of persecution, after openly stating that at the hour of writing the letter the Christian community was exposed to some dire penalties, after penning the sad sentence, "We are struggling on the same arena, the same conflict awaits us and you," Clement wrote the following noble prayer for Ruler and Governor: "Guide our steps to walk in holiness and righteousness and simpleness of heart, and to do such things as are good and well pleasing in Thy sight, and in the sight of our rulers. Give concord and peace to us and to all that dwell on the earth . . . that we may be saved; while we render obedience to Thine Almighty and most excellent Name, and to our Rulers and Governors upon the earth. Thou, O Lord and Master, hast given them the power of sovereignty, through Thine excellent and unspeakable might, that we, knowing the glory and honour which Thou hast given them, may submit ourselves unto them, in nothing resisting Thy will." *

* Clem. Rom.: *Ep.*, 1, 7, 60–61. The rest of this most beautiful prayer in the liturgy at the end of the Epistle, lately recovered, is well worth reading and pondering over, as it evidently reflects perfectly the mind of Christians towards

This expression of quiet loyalty to the Emperor and the Magistrates of the Empire on the part of the important Roman community at such an early period, while a cruel persecution was actually going on, voiced by so eminent a Christian leader as Clement, the Bishop of Rome, is of great importance; and after the affirmations respecting doctrines, which we shall presently deal with, is perhaps the most interesting disclosure respecting the inner life of the primitive Church in this great letter. The principle of unswerving loyalty to the chief of the State, and of uncomplaining submission to the harshest Imperial decrees, here laid down so sublimely in this weighty utterance of the Roman Church *circa* A.D. 96, passed into the unwritten law of the Church. It is dwelt upon by other famous Christians in writings which have come down to us, probably about a century after the death of Clement, notably by the eloquent Carthaginian theologian Tertullian.

Loyal obedience to the constituted power of the Empire was pressed home in the most emphatic terms by the Apostles Peter and Paul; and their disciple Clement, when he became head of the great Church they founded, reiterated the charge given by those inspired followers of the Master.

But, in the inner life of the very early Christian Church, of still greater importance is the testimony afforded by Clement's writings to the fundamental *doctrines* taught in the Christian Church of Rome a quarter of a century after the deaths of Peter and Paul. Irenæus quotes Clement's letter as passing on to other Churches the tradition which he, Clement, had lately received from the Apostles.

Very definite was the teaching on the Atonement and Mediation of Christ. The spirit of Clement was deeply tinged with the thoughts and the very language of the Epistle to the Hebrews; constantly he speaks of the "blood of Christ" with reference to "ransom," "deliverance," etc. He emphatically believed in the pre-existence of Christ, and

their persecutors in the first century. It was the model upon which the Christians ordered their behaviour to the State during the second and third and the early years of the fourth century.

refers explicitly to His Resurrection. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is clearly emphasised. We come upon the following passages, for instance, in our letter: "As God liveth and Jesus Christ liveth, and the Holy Ghost (Who are) the faith and hope of the Elect" (*c.* 58), and "Have we not one God and one Christ and one Spirit of Grace that was shed upon us?" (*c.* 46).

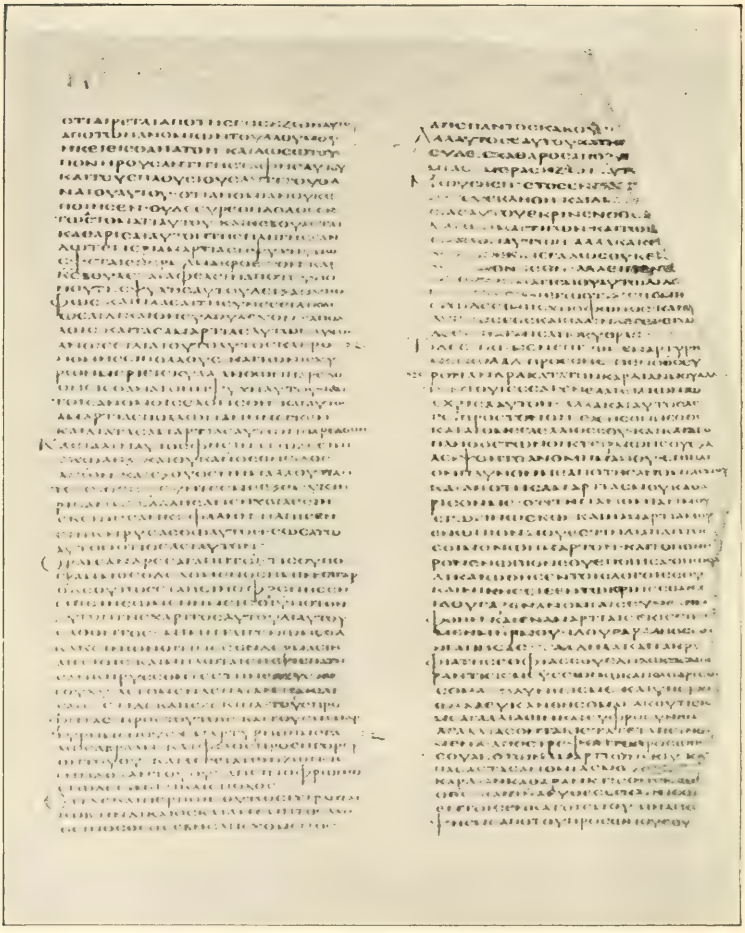
The Divinity of Christ is even asserted by Clement in terms which the more guarded theologians of the fourth century would have shrunk from using, for fear of being charged with Patripassian errors.*

These are only great landmarks in Clement's famous writing; but the letter shows how deeply saturated was the writer with the doctrinal teaching of the more important Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Corinthians, as well as with the Catholic truths set out in several of the smaller Epistles, notably in that to the Ephesians. He was equally at home too with Peter's first and weightier Epistle, and also with that of James; the Epistle to the Hebrews, its thoughts and even its language, were evidently so familiar to Clement that many ancient scholars attributed the authorship of that great letter to him. To sum up, he is a powerful witness to the unity, to the *oneness* of the teaching of the primitive Church; never divided, as some modern critics love to assert, into schools of which the honoured names of Peter and Paul and James were respectively the watchwords.

The witness of the letter of Clement to the inner life of the Christian community of Rome at the end of the first century has been wonderfully enriched by an unexpected discovery in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The Epistle of S. Clement of Rome was first published

* The passage referred to occurs in the second section of the letter, when if the reading deliberately preferred by Bishop Lightfoot (with Harnack) be adopted Clement would be speaking of the "sufferings of God" (*τὰ παθήματα αὐτοῦ*), the antecedent to *αὐτοῦ* being "God." This language is found not unfrequently in early writers, *e.g.* Ignatius, several times; in Melito of Sardis, in Tatian, and in the "Testament of the XII. Patriarchs," and in various places in Tertullian, with which Acts xx. 28 may be compared.



FACSIMILE OF A PAGE FROM "CODEX A,"

CONTAINING A PORTION OF CC. XVI. AND XVII., ETC, OF THE EPISTLE OF CLEMENT.

Presented to Charles I. by the Patriarch, Cyril Lucar; now in the British Museum.

about two centuries and a half ago from a precious MS. presented to King Charles I. by Cyril Lucar, Patriarch, first of Alexandria and subsequently of Constantinople, and brought to England in the year 1628. It is now in the British Museum, and is known as "A." It contained originally the Old and New Testaments, but has been mutilated. The MS. was written as far back as the fourth century, or possibly a little later in the fifth century. The letter of Clement* stands at the end of the New Testament, in this MS., which until the last few years was the only existing MS. of our letter, and just at the end a page was wanting.

In the year 1875 the letter was published by Bryennios, Metropolitan of Serrae, from a MS. lately discovered in the library of the Holy Sepulchre in Constantinople. In this MS. the long lost page existed. Very shortly after a Syrian MS. was unearthed, also containing the letter with the lost page. We therefore now possess the whole of Clement's writing.

The recovered page contains a beautiful and striking prayer of considerable length, occupying above seventy lines of an ordinary octavo page. It is a kind of litany, opening with an elaborate invocation of God; then comes an intercession for wanderers, hungry ones, captives, etc. These intercessions are followed by a general confession of sins and prayer for pardon and Divine help. It is in the course of this long litany and prayer that the remarkable sentences occur to which reference has been already made, which indicate the attitude assumed by the suffering and persecuted Christians towards the Emperor and his Government.

Bishop Lightfoot of Durham draws the following conclusions from this prayer of Clement:

"What then shall we say of this litany? Has S. Clement introduced into his epistle a portion of a fixed form of words then in use in the Roman Church?" He thus answers his question: "There was at this time no authoritative

* There is a second letter of Clement following the "first" in the MS., but as it is not considered by scholars as a writing of Clement, we have not noticed it here.

written liturgy in use in the Church of Rome, but the prayers were modified at the discretion of the officiating minister. Under the dictation of habit and experience, however, these prayers were gradually assuming a fixed form. . . As the chief pastor of the Roman Church would be the main instrument in thus moulding the liturgy, the prayers, without actually being written down, would assume in his mind a fixity as time went on. When, therefore, at the close of his epistle he asks his readers to fall on their knees, and lay down their jealousies and disputes at the footstool of grace, his language naturally runs into those measured cadences which his ministrations in the Church had rendered habitual with him when dealing with such a subject. . . It has all the appearance of a fixed form."*

The deduction which must be drawn from the presence of this "memory" of what was evidently a public liturgy, is that before the end of the first century there were fixed forms of prayer; if not written, certainly committed to memory, and used in the religious assemblies of the Church in Rome. Before Clement, the disciple of Peter and Paul, had passed away, the Roman Church, with its wide almsgiving by no means confined to the members of the metropolitan Church, its government, its forms of service, its authoritative teaching in all fundamental articles of doctrine, evidently had already been carefully organised.

The especially reverent care for the bodies of the faithful departed was a great feature among the Christians of the first three centuries. We shall a little later discuss and illustrate this anxious solicitude of Christians for their dead, when we come to speak of the cemeteries or catacombs. Already, however, in the days of Clement's episcopate, and even earlier, we have proofs of this care and solicitude.

Late investigations have clearly identified the catacombs

* Nor is it only in the lately recovered page of the letter of Clement that memories of a well-known and often repeated liturgy are discernible. In various portions of the writing, bits of solemn prayers evidently used in the congregation are woven into the tapestry of this most ancient letter of the Bishop and community of Rome to the Corinthian Christian community.

on the Via Ardeatina, hard by the well-known Appian Way, as the cemetery of Domitilla. This cemetery was made upon and beneath the estate of Flavia Domitilla, the kinswoman of Domitian, whose husband, the former consul, suffered for his faith in the Domitian persecution, when Domitilla herself was banished. The cemetery in question was one of the earliest prepared by wealthy Roman Christians for the reception of the dead members of their own family, as well as to provide a resting place for the remains of poorer members of the Church. Among the various pieces of identification of the cemetery is the character of the adornment of its sepulchral chambers, which belong unmistakably to the first century. The cemetery of Domitilla, however, is not the only one which clearly belongs to this very early time.

The story of Clement after he passed away came to be invested with a mythical dignity which is without example in the ante-Nicene Church. The events of his life have been so strangely involved in consequence of the religious romances which bear his name (the Clementines, etc., above referred to) that for the most part they must remain in inextricable confusion.* We have endeavoured to disentangle something, separating some clear facts from the merely legendary, and to present, mainly drawn from his own words, just a few really historical records of this first-century leader of the Church of the metropolis, and of his work.

A striking historical monument of Clement has recently been brought to light. It was a custom of very early date in the Church to build over the tomb of a saint or martyr a little memorial chapel or oratory. This oratory is frequently styled the "Memoria." Now Jerome, writing *circa* A.D. 392, tells us how a Church or Basilica erected at Rome at the foot of the Cœlian Hill protects (*custodit*) the "Memoria" of Clement. It was, from Jerome's words, no very recent erection. (He was writing at the close of the fourth century.) Constantly during the centuries which followed the death of Jerome, we come upon mentions of this church or basilica of Clement. Late excavations throw much light upon this

* Bishop Westcott of Durham, on the Canon (chap. i., section 1).

venerable relic of the famous pupil of the Apostles Peter and Paul. It was found that three distinct buildings existed; one erected over the other. Beneath the present church is an earlier basilica in which the original columns are now standing. This was the church of which Jerome writes in the fourth century. It was built in the hollow between the Cœlian and Esquiline Hills. After the utter ruin of large portions of the city, caused by the storming of Rome by Robert Guiscard in the year 1084, the dip or hollow between the two hills was, in part, gradually filled up by the *débris* of the ruins of that quarter of the city, which especially suffered in that crushing calamity. As time went on, over the old basilica, which was buried beneath the *débris* in question, arose the "new" church, which is still standing. The new basilica, though it was somewhat smaller, closely followed the lines of the old church of the age of Constantine, that of which Jerome writes. Much of the stone and marble furniture which had not perished was brought up and placed in the present church, which retains more of the details of primitive church architecture (of the fourth century) than any other building in Rome. Directly underneath these two churches was found a third and yet lower building (the discovery was in 1858–61). This lowest edifice was partly composed of masonry dating back to the regal or republican period. But what was of the highest interest in this third building was a chamber, which the famous archæologist De Rossi, whose researches have thrown so much light upon the Church of the first three centuries, believes to have been the original "Memoria" of Clement. To the west of this chamber, with its wonderful traditions, was found another long vaulted chapel, with an altar and other remains, showing that it was once used for the worship of Mithras, a divinity who became, towards the end of the second and during the third century, a favourite and fashionable object of worship in Rome and its neighbourhood. De Rossi thinks that this "chapel" was once a part of the original house of Clement; that it was confiscated in one of the earlier persecutions and devoted to the popular rites of Mithras; and that, some time after the

peace of the Church (A.D. 313), it was restored to the Church when a basilica (the one spoken of by Jerome) was erected over the original little "Memoria" * of Clement.

Clement passed away *circa* A.D. 100, dying, it would seem, a natural death. We do not hear anything of his martrydom till about three centuries later.

The Acts of Clement are evidently fictitious, and were probably written not earlier than the end of the fourth century. In these he is related to have been banished to the Chersonese, where he suffered martyrdom. In the ninth century his bones were strangely discovered, brought back to Rome, and deposited in the basilica bearing his name. That such a translation of his "supposed" remains took place in the pontificate of Adrian II. (A.D. 867–872) is apparently, however, an authentic record.

What, then, was the "Memoria" spoken of by Jerome centuries before? Was it a chapel, erected actually over Clement's remains, or was it simply a little oratory commemorative of the great Bishop? The former would seem more probable; in which case the first basilica of Clement was no doubt built over his actual tomb.

* The word "Memoria" sometimes alternates with "Confessionary," being used to denote the small oratory or chapel built over the tomb of a martyr or saint. Jerome's words are precise here: "Nominis ejus (*i.e.* Clement) memoriam usque hodie Romæ exstructa ecclesia custodit." "A church erected at Rome preserves to this day (or protects to this day) the memorial chapel built in his name." (*Vir. illustr.*, 15.)

CHAPTER IV.

S. JOHN AND POLYCARP.

SECTION I.—S. JOHN.

Among the first leaders of the Christian communities there were three teachers of commanding personality, each of the three having his own peculiar characteristic features. Two of these, S. Peter and S. John, had been with the Lord during the whole of His public ministry, and had especially enjoyed His friendship and confidence. The third, S. Paul, although not His companion during the three years of His public ministry, had been singled out by the Holy Spirit shortly after the Resurrection, and set apart for a peculiar and important work—a work which he carried out during many years of unresting toil with conspicuous devotion and singular success.

The career of two of these great teachers was closed, as we have seen, about the year 67–8, in the course of the persecution of Nero. The connection of Peter and Paul with the Roman congregation was very close. There, in the metropolis, they had spent a considerable time; the Roman Church in an especial way had been their care. Peter was the traditional founder of the Church of Rome, while the longest and most important of Paul's letters was addressed to the Roman Christians. Rome was the scene of the close of their devoted lives. While they lived there is no doubt that the great capital of the Empire was the centre of the fast growing religion of Jesus.

Peter and Paul passed away, however, if not together, at all events at very nearly the same time, and in the same

fiery trial; and, after their death, the headquarters of Christendom for a considerable period was shifted to another centre.

The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (A.D. 70), some three or four years after the death of the two Apostles, for ever put an end to any claim of the Holy City, with its undying memories, to be in any sense a Christian centre. We must seek henceforth another spiritual capital.

When Peter and Paul were dead it was natural that the eyes of Christians in different parts of the Roman world should be turned to the disciple who, along with them, had been ever looked upon as a special depository of the Lord's teaching; in some respects less prominent than the two who had sealed their long and faithful witness by a death of pain and agony, but in others even their superior. John was some years younger than Peter and Paul, of a nature more retiring, more contemplative. But he filled a place never occupied by those two great teachers; for when Jesus lived on earth it was well known that John was the "Disciple whom the Master loved." The memory of that love was ever the peculiar title to honour of the third of the great trio who were the acknowledged leaders of the Church of the first days; and when Peter and Paul were no longer on earth John became indisputably the central figure, to whom all the Brethren looked for guidance and teaching.

At the epoch of the catastrophe of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, John was in the Island of Patmos—banished, and probably a prisoner. But the banishment and confinement soon came to an end when the period of comparative stillness set in after the death of the tyrant Nero; for after A.D. 70 we find the loved Apostle residing at Ephesus, which seems to have been his headquarters during the thirty years which still remained for him to live and work among men. Ephesus therefore, and the region of Asia Minor round that important city, must be regarded as for many years the spiritual centre of Christendom.

Others, too, of great reputation among the Christian community were attracted to Asia Minor; they probably selected this populous and famous district as their home in order to be near John. Among these, trustworthy tradition specially mentions two brother Apostles, friends of John in his youth, and, like him, originally fishermen of Bethsaida, Andrew and Philip.* We learn also from the same ancient authority of two other personal disciples of Christ in these parts—Aristion and a second John, with whom Papias had talked respecting the human life of the Lord and the earliest days of the Church.

In the city of Ephesus and its neighbourhood, for some thirty years after the deaths of Peter and Paul and the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) S. John lived, dying in extreme old age about the last year of the first century, when the Emperor Trajan was reigning. In this famous centre he gathered round him many disciples, ordaining bishops and presbyters. From very early notices we possess some authentic traditions respecting his busy, active life; indeed, the traditions of S. John, owing no doubt to the great prolongation of his life after the Church was firmly established and in part organised, and to his fixed residence in the midst of a large Christian community, are more consistent and trustworthy than those which relate to the later life of any other of the Apostles.

It was in this period that he revised his Apocalypse, written in the first instance probably between A.D. 68 and 70 while in exile at Patmos. It is some such revision or redaction by the Apostle himself to which Irenæus most likely refers when he mentions somewhat vaguely the end of Domitian's reign as the period when the vision was seen. It was, too, in this long time of comparative stillness, when he dwelt at Ephesus, that the fourth Gospel was put out

* Mentioned in the Muratorian Fragment on the Canon—an authentic piece dating from *circa* A.D. 170. This is quoted at some length a little farther on. Papias specially alludes to Philip and his daughters residing at Hierapolis. See Eus. *H. E.* iii., 39, v. 24. Papias was a companion of Polycarp, and lived and wrote early in the second century. Some think, with Irenæus, that he was himself a hearer of S. John.

in the form in which we now possess it. The words of the ancient Muratorian Canon (*circa* A.D. 170) give the original tradition of how the first draft of that Gospel was suggested. The exact phraseology of this venerable fragment of early Christian literature is peculiarly interesting.

"The fourth Gospel is (the work) of John, one of the disciples. Being exhorted by his fellow-disciples and Bishops, he said: 'Fast with me to-day for three days, and let us relate to one another what shall have been revealed to each.' The same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the Apostles, that 'John should write down everything in his own name, and all should certify' . . . ."

The narrative portion of the Gospel, and the great theological truths enshrined in it, had doubtless often formed part of S. John's teaching in public and in private. The Gospel according to S. John, arranged as we now have it, embodying as it does a summary of the great Apostle's teaching respecting the Person and Office of the Lord, was the result of much toil and thought, and was the great monument of the prolonged life at Ephesus.

The Muratorian fragment above referred to proceeds to quote John's own words in his first Epistle: "What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, these things we have written unto you." He thus declares himself to be not only an eye-witness and a hearer, but also a recorder of all the wonderful things of the Lord in order.*

Any personal memories of S. John at this period are of rare interest. Three of these are preserved to us in undoubtedly authentic documents. Irenæus, writing in the last quarter of the second century, gives us some of his memories

* The "Muratorian Fragment" was discovered in the Ambrosian Library at Milan in a MS. of the works of Chrysostom of great antiquity. It is mutilated at the beginning and the end, and is an unskilful translation of a letter from a lost Greek original. It is a piece of the highest importance. Its date is shown by a reference to Pope Pius I., and must be placed *circa* A.D. 170. Internal evidence fully confirms its claim to this high antiquity; and scholars generally regard it as a summary of the opinion of the Western Church on the New Testament Canon shortly after the middle of the second century.

of his old master Polycarp. Polycarp, it must be remembered, was a hearer and disciple of S. John. He relates how Polycarp used to describe to his pupils his intercourse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate his very words.*

Another of these memories of S. John is also given us by Irenæus, speaking again of his old master Polycarp. "There are those who have heard him (Polycarp) tell how John the disciple of the Lord, when he went to take a bath at Ephesus, and when he saw Cerinthus [the famous heretical teacher] within, rushed away from the room without bathing, with the words 'Let us flee lest the room should fall in, for Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within.'" † The old fiery spirit of the "Son of Thunder," Boanerges, as the Lord once termed him and his brother long years before, still lived evidently in the old man John.

One more striking memory of S. John's life at Ephesus is preserved to us by Clement of Alexandria, who also wrote about the end of the same century (the second). It is too long for quotation, but it gives a graphic description of a young convert to Christianity who had fallen away, had taken to evil courses, and had become a robber. John seeks him out in the midst of the robber horde, and with touching reproaches wins him back again, telling the apostate how he had found pardon for him in his prayers at the hands of Christ. Clement relates the story, emphatically prefacing it with the words: "Listen to a story that is no fiction but a real history handed down, and carefully preserved, respecting the Apostle John." ‡

SECTION II.—S. POLYCARP.

IMMEDIATELY after the death of S. John, at the close of the first century, we gather some weighty materials for the history of the Church in the writings, undoubtedly authentic,

* Letter of Irenæus to Florinus. Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 20. (See p. 83 *infra*.)

† Irenæus, *Adv. Haer.*, iii. 3.

‡ See Eusebius, *H. E.*, iii. 23. Clem. Alex., *Quis dives salv.*, 42.

which we possess of two eminent Christian teachers, both younger contemporaries of the Apostle.

The elder of these, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, we leave for the moment, since his famous letters are well nigh all that we possess of his history.

The other, Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna and disciple of John, occupies in the annals of early Christianity a peculiar and commanding position. This he owes partly to his long and distinguished career, partly to the "Memories" preserved to us by his great disciple Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons in Gaul and by others; partly, of course, also, to his own interesting Epistle to the Philippians, and to the letter written after his death by his Smyrnaean flock to the Church of Philomelium, containing details of his martyrdom; both of which "pieces" are considered by all serious critics as undoubtedly genuine.

Polycarp was born about the year 69–70. He evidently belonged to a Christian family, and was brought up in that district of Asia Minor where the influence of S. John was paramount, but where other eminent Christian leaders, besides S. John, were residing—men who had personally known the Lord. When S. John died, Polycarp was only about thirty years old. Irenæus tells us he received his appointment as Bishop of the important congregation of Smyrna from Apostles; and other writers, *e.g.* Tertullian, not much later than Irenæus, say distinctly that he was appointed to his responsible office by S. John himself.

At an early period of his public career (*circa* A.D. 107–9), Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, on his journey to his Roman martyrdom, writes to Polycarp, already Bishop of Smyrna. The spirit of this letter—one of the now generally acknowledged genuine Ignatian epistles—is what we should expect from an old man writing to a younger one who was holding a position of great responsibility, and had proved himself, in spite of his comparative youth, to be worthy of his high and dangerous post, but who yet evidently, in the eyes of the martyr, had faults which he might correct.

He charges his younger friend in the following language: "Vindicate thine office in all diligence, whether in things

carnal or in things spiritual. Have a care for unity, than which nothing is better. Sustain all men, even as the Lord sustaineth thee. Suffer all men in love, as also thou dost . . . Ask for more wisdom than thou hast . . . The time requireth thee, as pilots require winds, or as a storm-tossed mariner a haven, so that it may find God . . . Be sober as God's athlete . . . stand firm as an anvil under the stroke of a hammer. It becomes a great athlete to endure blows and to conquer."

Of the circle of disciples and pupils whom S. John during his long residence at Ephesus gathered round him, Polycarp was the most illustrious. Indeed, after the passing away of the loved Apostle, at an advanced age, he was perhaps one of the most important persons in the Church.

Long years afterwards it was the delight of the Bishop of Smyrna to relate to his disciples and hearers what he had heard from eye-witnesses of the Lord's earthly life; and especially he seems to have loved to dwell on his friendship and intercourse with John the beloved. Before Polycarp died even unbelievers had come to look upon the venerable Bishop of Smyrna as the Father of Christians.

Irenæus, one of the ablest of the Christian writers of the second century, who became Bishop of Lyons in A.D. 177, received his early instruction at the hands of Polycarp, and in a passage in one of his writings of singular interest, gives us a picture of his great master. It occurs in a letter to an old comrade and fellow pupil, one Florinus, who in later life had become unhappily famous as a heretical leader. Irenæus is remonstrating with his old friend after his falling away in the following terms: "These opinions, Florinus, that I may speak without harshness, are not of sound judgment; these opinions are not in harmony with the Church, but involve those adopting them in the greatest impiety . . . these opinions the elders before us, who were also disciples of the Apostles, did not hand down to thee. For I saw thee, when I was still a youth in Lower Asia, in company with Polycarp, while thou wast faring prosperously in the royal court, and endeavouring to stand well with him

(Polycarp). For I distinctly remember the incidents of that time better than events of recent occurrence; for the lessons received in childhood, growing with the growth of the soul, became identified with it; so that I can describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp used to sit when he discoursed, and his goings out and his comings in, and his manner of life, and his personal appearance, and the discourses which he held before the people, and how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the rest who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate their words, And whatsoever things he had heard from them about the Lord, and about His miracles and about His teaching, Polycarp, as having received these from eye-witnesses of the life of the Word, would relate altogether in accordance with the Scripture. To these (discourses) I could listen at the time with attention, by God's mercy which was bestowed upon me, noting them down, not on paper, but in my heart; and by the grace of God, I constantly ruminate upon them faithfully. And I can testify in the sight of God, that if the blessed and Apostolic elder had heard anything of this kind" (alluding here to the heresy of Florinus he was writing about) "he would have cried out, and stopped his ears, and said after his wont, 'O good God, for what times hast Thou kept me, that I should endure such things?' and would even have fled from the place where he was sitting or standing, when he heard such words. And indeed this can be shown from his letters which he wrote to the neighbouring Churches for their confirmation, or to certain of the brethren for their warning and exhortation."*

Far and wide extended the work of this great early teacher of Christianity. The flourishing and powerful Church of Gaul, which we shall have to speak of later as one of the most sorely tried by persecution, was the daughter of the Asian Church where Polycarp for so many years exercised so predominant an influence. Irenæus, whom we have just quoted, became Bishop of the important Gallican see of Lyons in A.D. 177, in succession to the aged Pothinus, who

* Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 20.

suffered martyrdom in the persecution which raged in the Churches of Lyons and Vienne when Marcus Antoninus was Emperor. The circular letter from Gaul giving the graphic account of the martyrdom of the saints of Lyons and Vienne, so well known to students of early Christian literature, was addressed to the brethren in Phrygia and "Asia," and shows how close was the link which bound the two distant countries together. Christian Gaul, when it sent the pathetic recital of the sufferings of its martyrs in the arena, was assured, it writes, of the deep sympathy of the older Christian communities.

"The veneration of Christians for Polycarp was unbounded. His Apostolic training, his venerable age, his long hours spent in prayer, his personal holiness, all combined to secure him this reverence. By the heathen, as we have noticed, he was regarded as the 'Father of the Christians.' They singled him out as the one man who had dethroned their gods, and robbed them of the sacrifices and the adoration of their worshippers. More especially did he seem gifted with a singular prescience. It was even believed that nothing which he foretold ever failed of accomplishment; but far more important to the Church than his predictions of the future were his memories of the past. In him one single link connected the earthly life of Christ with the close of the second century, though five or six generations had intervened. S. John, Polycarp, Irenæus—this was the succession which guaranteed the continuity of the Evangelical record and of the Apostolic teaching. The long life of S. John, followed by the long life of Polycarp, had secured this result." *

Far on in his busy, beautiful life, Polycarp, then acknowledged, as Irenæus tells us, as the most venerable personage in Christendom, paid a visit to Rome. There were many subjects of information on which it was desirable that one who had been a pupil of S. John should confer with Anicetus, the honoured chief of the great community of Christians resident in the metropolis of the Empire.

One of these subjects especially exercised the minds of

* Bishop Lightfoot: *Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. i. 1, pp. 473–4.

believers. Christians were curiously divided on the question as to the correct time when the Easter festival should be celebrated. Two opinions were held; the one, for which Polycarp pleaded the practice of S. John and of other Apostles with whom, in his early days, he had been associated, maintained that the Paschal Supper the evening before the Passion of the Lord, should be celebrated after the Jewish custom on the fourteenth day of the first (Jewish) month (Nisan); and three days later, *without regard to the day of the week,* the feast of the Resurrection was kept. Rome and other Western Churches, however, held it unlawful to interrupt the fast of the Holy Week, or to celebrate the Resurrection on any other day than the first day of the week. Their Easter consequently was always on a Sunday. The Asiatic or *quarto deciman* practice, as it was termed, was advocated by Polycarp on the authority of S. John and of the Apostles, who in their later lives had lived in Asia Minor. That of Rome was advocated by Anicetus (Bishop of Rome) on the authority of S. Peter and S. Paul, who had lived and taught long in the great metropolis. Again and again this curious divergence of opinion on the question as to the day on which the great Church festival should be kept, cropped up and divided the Church.*

Polycarp, however, without yielding the point, did not allow the difference in ritualistic usage for an instant to interfere with his cordial relations with Anicetus and the Roman Church. And Anicetus followed his conciliatory example and allowed Polycarp, in token of an unbroken friendship, to celebrate the Eucharist in his place.

Very different, however, was the procedure of the great

* The *quarto deciman*, or Jewish practice maintained by Polycarp and other distinguished Christian leaders, notably by Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, in his controversy with Victor, Bishop of Rome (*circa* A.D. 197), was finally given up by a decision of the Council of Nicea A.D. 325, which ruled that Easter should be kept on one and the same day throughout the Christian world, viz. on the Sunday, the first day of the week. But the cycle by which the Easter festival was to be calculated was not agreed upon; hence the discrepancy in the *date* of the Easter festival, which was one of the points disputed between the Church of Rome and the ancient British Church.

Asian Bishop, the pupil of S. John, during his Roman visit, when graver questions respecting fundamental doctrine were brought before him. He could, and did, place on one side as comparatively unimportant, divergence in ritual and in mere observances—for which divergence, be it noted, evidence on both sides was alleged. These things, thought the aged disciple of the Apostles, should never be allowed to interfere with the loving intercommunion of the Christian Brotherhood. But when *heresy* which affected the Person and Work of the Lord was in question, Polycarp could, and did, show himself the stern, uncompromising teacher of the truth. Let us listen again to Irenæus' account of Polycarp here, in his own vivid and soul-inspiring language: "And so it was with Polycarp also, who was not only taught by Apostles and lived in familiar intercourse with many that had seen Christ, but also received his appointment in Asia from Apostles, as Bishop of the Church of Smyrna; whom we too have seen in our early years; for he survived long, and departed this life at a very great age by a glorious and most notable martyrdom; having ever taught those very things which he had learnt from the Apostles, which the Church hands down, and which alone are true. To this, testimony is borne by all the Churches in Asia, and by the successors up to the present time," (*circa* A.D. 170–80) "of Polycarp, who was a much more trustworthy and safe witness of the truth than Valentinus or Marcion" (famous Gnostic teachers) "and all such wrong-minded men. He also" (Polycarp) "when on a visit to Rome in the days of Anicetus, converted many to the Church of God from following the aforenamed heretics, by preaching that which he had received from the Apostles, that doctrine and that only which was handed down by the Church as the truth."

(Here Irenæus tells the story of the horror of S. John when he met at the bath at Ephesus the Gnostic Cerinthus.)

"Yea, and Polycarp himself, also, when Marcion on one occasion confronted him and said: 'Do you recognise me?' Polycarp replied, 'Yes, yes; I recognise the first-born of Satan.' So great care did the Apostles and their disciples take not to

hold any communication even by word with any of those who falsify the truth. As Paul also said, 'A man that is a heretic, after a first and second admonition, avoid, knowing that such an one is perverted and sinneth, being self-condemned.'"*

Rome, in the middle of the second century, was the common rendezvous of Christian teachers, orthodox and heretical, from all countries; and Irenæus here tells us how Polycarp, in the course of his memorable Roman visit, met with the eminent leaders of the widespread Gnostic heresy, and what he thought of them.

As a writer this great early Christian leader was in no way remarkable. Polycarp was clearly inferior here to Clement of Rome or to Ignatius. We possess of his writings but one epistle of undoubted authenticity, addressed by him to the Philippian Church. The scanty reliques of our early Christian literature include no theological *treatise* by him. He was rather a man of action than of contemplation; a great organiser; a devoted pastor; an unwearied shepherd of an ever-growing and often sorely harassed flock. These were Polycarp's titles to honour. The one solitary epistle of his which has come down to us possesses the highest value as an undoubted document of very early Christian literature, but as a literary production it does not rank high. It is remarkable from the number of its quotations from Apostles' writings. Short as it is, it contains striking coincidences with, or plain references to, as many as some twenty or more passages from the writings of Paul and Peter and other documents now included in our New Testament Canon. S. Paul especially is quoted and referred to. Polycarp mentions him by name, placing himself on a much lower level than the revered Apostle of the Gentiles. His words here are specially interesting as an indication of the exalted estimate formed, by the responsible Christian chiefs of the second generation, of the original band of Apostles, among whom Paul is reckoned. Polycarp is apologising for writing an official letter at all to the Philippian Church; he only ventured to do it, he says, on their "special

* Irenæus, *Adv. Haer.*, iii. 3-4.

invitation." "For neither am I," he goes on to say, "nor is any other like me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul who, when he came among you" (the Philippians) "taught face to face with the men of that day, the word which concerneth truth, carefully and surely; who also, when he was absent, wrote a letter to you, into which if you look diligently, ye shall be able to be builded up unto the faith given to you, which is the mother of us all."*

Very emphatically and simply does Polycarp in this little letter affirm the great Evangelical truth of the work of Jesus Christ. "Let us," he says, "hold fast by our hope . . . which is Jesus Christ, Who took up our sins in His own body on the tree."

With great force he expresses his views of the Godhead of the Lord Jesus. Twice† near the close of the letter he speaks of Jesus as God. The second reference is a striking one. "May He grant unto you a lot and portion among His saints, and to us with you . . . who shall believe on our Lord and God Jesus Christ, and on His Father that raised Him from the dead."

This eminent Christian teacher of the Church of the early and middle years of the second century, in some of the concluding words of his epistle, shows us, like Clement, who wrote from Rome some twelve or fourteen years before, how an unswerving loyalty to the Roman Government was enjoined upon Christian congregations; although part of the same letter treated of victims of the Imperial policy, of the martyred Paul and Ignatius, and other less known sufferers; while in the end the writer of the loyal words himself joined the same noble army. "Pray," wrote Polycarp (*c.* 12), "for kings, and powers, and princes, and for them that persecute you and hate you."

This sole surviving letter of Polycarp to the Philippian Church must have been written as early as A.D. 108–10.

The end of that earnest, useful life, so long protracted, came at last, very soon after Polycarp returned from Rome, *circa*

* Polycarp, *Phil.*, 3. † Polycarp, *Phil.*, 12.

A.D. 157.* One of those many persecutions, some of them general, some of them confined to certain localities, which harassed Christians more or less all through the first and second centuries, was raging in the populous district of Asia Minor of which Smyrna was a principal centre. The Christians of Proconsular Asia had markedly increased in number by the middle of the second century. In that Province, owing no doubt to the influence of the school of S. John, of which, as we have seen, Polycarp was the most distinguished representative, some writers even consider that by the middle of the second century well nigh half the population † was Christian. Fierce and uncontrollable jealousy of the Christians was, however, now and again excited among the Pagan inhabitants, among the many especially who lived by the worship at the heathen shrines—priests, tradesmen, craftsmen, and others connected with the widespread network, partly political, partly religious, of the ancient idolatrous cult. Such interested persons, probably very numerous, easily fomented a popular disturbance, and forced the Roman magistracy, often against their will, to take action against the obnoxious Christians; to set in force the State edicts which treated the members of the Christian community as enemies of the State, and as liable to the severest punishment. Such a state of things prevailed at Smyrna *circa* A.D. 157, when the inhabitants of Asia Minor were celebrating the great anniversary festival in that city. A vigorous persecution of the Christians began. Eleven of the more prominent were condemned to the wild beasts, and suffered in the public arena. The passions of the easily excited populace were stirred up by the bloody sight, and the cry arose, "Death to the Atheists. Let search be made for Polycarp their chief."

The story of the events which followed is told in simple

* In order to complete our picture of the life of this great early leader of the Christians, for which we possess such considerable authentic details, we have passed over a long and important stretch of time, to which we shall of course return. But Polycarp's life extended into the 'fifties of the second century.

† So Renan: *L'Eglise Chrétienne*, p. 432. This estimate is, however, probably far too high.

pathetic language in a letter written immediately after the tragedy by the Church of Smyrna to the Church of Philomelium, a small town with an earnest and devoted congregation of believers, situated some two hundred miles or more to the east of Smyrna on the borders of the Province of Proconsular Asia, not far from Pisidian Antioch.

The letter of the Church of Smyrna to the Christians of Philomelium is of undoubted authenticity. What has been well termed "the feverish and restless criticism" of late days has failed to shake the general confidence of scholars in its genuineness. One of the leading critics* of a school bitterly hostile to Christianity does not hesitate to accept it, and describes it in characteristic language: "This beautiful piece constitutes the most ancient example known of all the 'Acts of Martyrdom.' It was the model which was imitated, and which furnished the procedure and the essential parts of this species of composition."

Polycarp—we follow the recital in the letter to the Philomelians—when these bloody games were being played in the Smyrna arena, had retired into the country at some distance from the city. His whereabouts was disclosed to the Imperial police, who proceeded to arrest the aged Bishop. The old man might even then have escaped, but he disdained to fly, saying simply, "God's will be done." His guards evidently sympathised with him. He had long been a well known and venerated personage in Smyrna. They did not hurry him, but granted his request to be allowed to pray before accompanying them. For two hours, so says the recital in the letter, he talked with God, remembering in that solemn moment all who had ever come in his way, small and great, high and low. The officials, after he had finished his long prayer, seated the old man on an ass, and so brought him to the city. There the captain of the police and his father met him, and taking Polycarp into their carriage, tried to prevail upon him to acknowledge Cæsar as "Lord," and to offer incense at his shrine, but he refused.

They conducted him into the theatre where the games

* Renan: *L'Église Chrétienne*, ch. xxiii., pp. 462–3.

were being held, but the combats with wild beasts were over. A great uproar arose as the old man was led in.

A voice, which some thought came from above, cried out, "Polycarp, be strong and play the man." But he needed no such reminder. Death had no terrors for the aged Christian "athlete." The solemn moment to him was an intense joy and delight. Very urgently the proconsul, who was evidently loth to proceed to extreme measures in the case of one so loved and venerated, urged him to avail himself of the easy method of deliverance provided by the Roman Government; all he had to do, said the magistrate, was to say, "Away with the Atheists," and to swear by the "Genius of Cæsar."

Polycarp, looking up, away from the shrieking multitude and the ensigns of Imperial Rome, solemnly replied, "Yes, away with Atheists." Then the proconsul thought he had yielded. "Swear, as I have told you, Polycarp, by the genius of the Emperor, and revile Christ, and I will at once set you free." "Revile Christ?" replied the brave old Bishop. "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He hath done me no wrong. How can I say evil things of my King who saved me?"

Then the proconsul, perhaps reluctantly, announced that Polycarp had confessed himself a Christian. The concourse present shouted, "To the lions with him." The president of the games, the Asiarch Philip, said that would be impossible, for the "wild beasts" part of the great show was over. The crowd cried, "Then burn him."

With cruel rapidity the enemies of the Christians collected the materials for the fire; quickly the death-pyre was heaped up, and Polycarp, throwing aside his cloak and girdle, allowed himself to be bound to the stake. Then the old man prayed, and his words were words of praise and thanksgiving, and the wood was lighted and presently blazed up.

There is little if anything of the marvellous and supernatural in the touching, simple story. Some have thought a Divine interposition was visible in the action of the high wind, which wafted the flames aside, leaving the martyr in

the midst, while the fire, like the bellying sail of a ship, arched itself around him. But such a phenomenon* involves no miracle; the like has been seen in other scenes of burning. The voice bidding Polycarp "be strong and play the man" when he appeared before the assembly of the people in the stadium, no doubt proceeded from one of the bystanders. The dove which apparently issued from the wounded side of the martyr can also be explained. A bird hastily flying across in the immediate neighbourhood of the sufferer, in the heated imagination of the bystanders could easily be construed as a miraculous sign. The sweet scent, as of incense, which was said to have issued from the burning pyre, was probably the perfume of some of the wood which was piled up round the stake; especially as we read how the hostile Jews and other enemies of the Christian hastily gathered together timber and wood from different workshops and baths in the city.

Indeed, the comparative absence of the supernatural in the narrative, very different from many other records of the death of early Christian martyrs, or even of the passions of more recent sufferers for religion, is in itself a strong argument for the genuineness of the document.

The sufferings of the noble victim were not protracted; when the officials saw that the fire, from one cause or other, failed to do its work, the officer of the arena, whose special duty it was to despatch wounded and dying beasts, was summoned to complete the work; he pierced the old man with a dagger in a mortal place, and death speedily followed.

The Christians, the story goes on to say, were anxious to secure the hallowed remains of their sainted Bishop, but the Jews prevented them; and the centurion in command, to prevent a tumult, allowed the body to be consumed in the tardy flames of the pyre. The bones, however, were afterwards carefully collected, and reverently interred by the brethren.

* Something of a similar kind is related to have taken place at the burning of Savonarola at Florence and of Bishop Hooper at Gloucester, when the wind for a short space of time blew aside the flames from the victim.

The letter which contained this simple, true account was written to the Philomelians, who had asked for the details of the death of the great Christian teacher whom they loved. They were directed to circulate it among other and more distant congregations.

This martyrdom of Polycarp and of the other Christians at the games of Smyrna must be dated *circa* A.D. 157—when the Emperor Antoninus Pius was reigning; and is a good instance of the deadly perils to which the worshippers of Jesus were constantly exposed, even under the rule of the wisest and most beneficent of Roman Emperors, during the first three centuries of their existence as a religious sect.

CHAPTER V.

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH.

STRICTLY speaking, our account of Ignatius should have preceded that of Polycarp. We have dwelt first upon the life story of the Bishop of Smyrna mainly because through the references of contemporaries we have been enabled to trace the whole prolonged career of one who was in his early days directly connected with S. John.

Very different, however, are our materials for any picture of the career of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. Here we have scarcely anything from the very scanty references of contemporaries to help us. The few traditions belong to a later age and are untrustworthy. Ignatius, like others who lived in the age immediately following the times when the Apostles taught, would have been to us but the shadow of a great name, had it not been for a little collection of epistles of his which have come down the stream of time; a little packet, so to speak, of letters, which, in the form we now use, the most trustworthy scholars dare to pronounce absolutely genuine.

These letters, seven* in number, but by no means long, are of intense interest. They give us considerable insight into the constitution of the Christian Church a very few years after the death of S. John. Their date is clear, *circa* A.D. 107–10. They also give us the opinions of a great and responsible teacher, who learned his lessons from the lips of

* The whole seven taken together are not equal in bulk to S. Paul's two Epistles to the Corinthians by several chapters. On the question of their undoubted genuineness, see Appendix C in this volume; where the question of their authenticity is discussed at some length, and the results of the long drawn out controversy respecting their genuineness are summarised.

Apostles, on some of the more important of the fundamental Christian doctrines; telling us exactly what the disciples of Jesus thought of the Master, and said of the Master, in the first years of the second century.

Written under the shadow of death, the burning yet carefully weighed words of the writer show us also what an earnest Christian of that early age thought of death. To one like Ignatius, death seemed a friend which would bring him at once into the company of his adored Lord. These epistles, apart from their inestimable value as a very early piece of doctrinal teaching, lay bare to us the thoughts of a martyr before his passion. His words, the true expression of his heart, have brought to thousands of devoted followers of the Master comfort, encouragement, confidence; not only in the awful scenes so common in the centuries of persecution, but also in countless instances to harassed souls in the ages of comparative quiet which followed the first two hundred and eighty years of storm and stress for the Christian communities.

His martyrdom we can place with some certainty between A.D. 107 and A.D. 110. From expressions in his letters, it would seem that he was an old, or at least an elderly man, when he was condemned. This would give *circa* A.D. 40 as the date of his birth. He represents himself apparently as not born of Christian parentage, but as having been converted to Christianity in mature life. The earliest traditions unite in representing Ignatius as the second of the Antiochene Bishops. That he was a disciple of *one* of the great Apostles all early traditions tell us, one mentioning S. Peter, another S. John, a third S. Paul as his master. That he was an "Apostolic" man, or in other words a pupil of the Apostles, seems almost indisputable. That for a lengthened period he presided over the influential and numerous congregation of the great Syrian capital Antioch is equally certain.

By Syrian writers, to the name Ignatius is added the appellation Nurono, which some have supposed referred to the town Nora or Nura in Sardinia, "Ignatius Nuraniensis"; but there is nothing anywhere related which would give colour to the supposition that he was a native of Sardinia. The

appellation probably comes from the Syrian word "Nuro," or flame, and he would have received the name from his passionate devotion to the Redeemer, his heart being all aflame for God.

The term, however, by which Ignatius is best known, and which he uses himself in his letters, is "Theophorus," the God-borne; or, if the Greek word be differently accented, the God-bearer. This name or appellation has given rise to the favourite and beautiful story that Ignatius was the very child whom our Lord took in His arms (S. Mark ix. 36–37). But the striking legend was utterly unknown in early times. Eusebius, for instance, who has much to say of the Martyr-Bishop and his famous letters, is silent here. S. Chrysostom besides definitely tells us that, unlike the Apostles, Ignatius had not seen the Lord. Another interesting explanation, but little known, was current. This curiously relates how, when his heart was cut into small pieces, the name of Christ was inscribed in golden letters on each single piece. This fanciful legend strangely enough reminds us of Queen Mary's words—that when she was dead, the name of Calais would be read engraven on her heart.* The most probable explanation of the name is that the saint himself adopted it, as expressive of the ideal he ever proposed to himself—one who would bear God always in his thoughts. This assumption of a special designation in addition to the original name, was a common practice, of which there are many instances.

Of the circumstances of his arrest, trial, and condemnation at Antioch *circa* A.D. 107–10, we possess no definite information beyond what the saint tells us himself in his letters. The details contained in the "Acts of Martyrdom"† cannot

*Cf. Lightfoot, *Epp. of Ign.*, i. 1.

† The careful way, however, in which the dates and chronological notices are given in the "Acts of Martyrdom" are among the points which have been with some reason pressed, when the theory of an older and authentic document underlying the "Acts" in their present form is advanced. The Antiochene "Acts" above referred to are, however, the only "Acts" for which any plea of genuineness can be advanced. Many eminent scholars of an older generation, such as Usher, Pearson, Leclerc, and in our own time Allard, are persuaded at least of a basis of truth underlying them; see, however, the conclusions arrived at in Appendix C.

be received as authentic contemporary history. A persecution, which does not appear to have been general, a fierce onslaught on the Christian community of Antioch, had broken out, probably through some special accusations of informers; Ignatius, the chief pastor of the Church, was charged with professing and teaching Christianity; and on confessing at once that he was a Christian was condemned by the provincial magistrate to the wild beasts, and with other criminals was reserved for the Imperial games at Rome. These bloody sports in the reign of the Emperor Trajan were on a vast scale, and included mimic battles with real bloodshed, by sea and land, combats of men with wild beasts, and other horrible diversions in which the Roman populace evidently delighted, such as those mentioned in the account above given of Nero's games in the Vatican Gardens. A considerable supply of victims was required for these inhuman exhibitions. To meet this need the provincial governors were required to send up to Rome from time to time criminals who had been convicted of a capital offence; to play, fight, and suffer in one of the enormous amphitheatres, and to be included in the great crowd of guilty and innocent men and women who on high festival occasions were "called for to make sport for the people."

Ignatius was one of these victims. No successful general ever journeyed Romewards—looking forward to being the principal figure in one of those proud triumphs with which the Empire was wont to honour her successful captains—more joyfully than did Ignatius in that painful journey of his from Antioch to Rome—looking forward to being, in the eyes of his brother Christians, the chief sufferer in the blood-stained Imperial games. His only fear was lest some ill-advised powerful friend of the Christians should use his influence at the last moment, and rescue him from the martyr's death for which he so passionately longed.

It was a long journey from Syrian Antioch to Rome. Under the custody of a little company of ten soldiers, he most probably embarked at Seleucia for some Cilician or

Pamphylian harbour, and from there travelled across the districts of Asia Minor to the Western Coast.

At Philadelphia his escort made a halt, to which he especially refers in his letters to the Church. From this city he was taken to Smyrna, where again a stay was made of some considerable duration. There the prisoner was warmly and affectionately welcomed by the Bishop, Polycarp. Thither also there came to visit him delegates from Ephesus and its Church, headed by the Bishop Onesimus, and from the Christian communities of the cities of Tralles and Magnesia.

From Smyrna the martyr wrote four of the famous epistles which we still possess; to the Churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, and one, which as we shall see was especially prized by the early Church, to the Roman community.

After Smyrna, the next lengthy halt was at Alexandria Troas. At Troas the condemned Bishop wrote three more letters. Of these letters, two were addressed to the communities he had visited in his painful journey—the Christians of Philadelphia and Smyrna; and the third, from which we have already quoted, was specially written to Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna. When this letter was written he was about to sail to Neapolis, on the European coast. From Neapolis he was taken another stage of his long journey, to Philippi. But after the letters written by Ignatius at Troas we have nothing from his pen; what little more we learn of the saint comes from another source.

While at Philippi he had directed the brethren there to write a letter to his own Church of Antioch, with news of their captive Bishop. The Philippian Church wrote to Polycarp of Smyrna requesting that their letter, written according to the martyr's direction, should be conveyed to Antioch. Polycarp's reply to the Philippians, already referred to, is the solitary letter which we possess of the great Bishop of Smyrna. In it he asks for any further information they might possess respecting the fate of Ignatius; but we have no record of their reply.

So far for the celebrated journey of Ignatius from Antioch to Rome we have authoritative evidence. The genuineness of the seven letters of the martyr and of the subsequent letter of Polycarp to the Philippians is now placed beyond dispute. That Ignatius was taken from Philippi to Rome, that he suffered death, exposed to wild beasts in that enormous amphitheatre, whose vast ruins are so well known under the name of the Colosseum, erected by the Imperial Flavian House expressly for the bloody games in which the Romans delighted, there is no doubt. Tradition is unanimous, here.

It will, however, be specially interesting to see what the Antiochene "Acts of Martyrdom" relate concerning the last hours of the martyr.

In the Appendix C the genuineness of the existing form of the "Acts" is discussed. Bishop Lightfoot, while rejecting (contrary to the opinions of some scholars) these "Acts" as a genuine contemporary piece, considers that a residuum of a true tradition is possibly preserved in them, some earlier document being embodied in the recital, especially in those parts which profess to be related by eye-witnesses. These eye-witnesses tell us how a favourable wind carried the ship in which Ignatius was sailing past Puteoli to the harbour of the Romans (Ostia) too quickly for these eye-witnesses, who, to use their own words, were "mourning over the separation which must soon come between ourselves and this righteous man, while he had his wish fulfilled; for he was eager to depart from the world quickly, that he might hasten to join the Lord whom he loved. Wherefore as he landed at the port of the Romans just when the unholy sports were nearing a close, the soldiers were vexed at the slow pace, while the Bishop gladly obeyed them as they hurried him forward."

The witnesses of the end set out from the port at break of day and, "as the doings of the holy martyr had already been rumoured abroad, we were met by the brethren, who were filled at once with fear and joy—with joy, because they were vouchsafed the meeting with the 'God-bearer'; with fear because so good a man was on the way to execution.

And some of them he, Ignatius, also charged to hold their peace, when in the fervour of their zeal they said that they would stay the people from seeking the death of the righteous man. Having recognised these at once by the Spirit, and having saluted all of them, he asked them to show their genuine love, and discoursed at greater length than in his epistle, and persuaded them not to grudge one who was hastening to meet his Lord; and then, all the brethren falling on their knees, he made entreaty to the Son of God for the Churches, for the staying of the persecutions, and for the love of the brethren one to another, and was led away promptly into the amphitheatre. Then forthwith he was put into the arena in obedience to the previous order of Cæsar (the Emperor Trajan) just as the sports were drawing to a close . . . whereupon he was thrown by these godless men to savage beasts, and so the desire of the holy martyr Ignatius was fulfilled forthwith . . . that he might not be burdensome to any of the brethren by the collection of his reliques, according as he had already in his epistle expressed his desire that his own martyrdom might be, for only the tougher part of his holy relics were left, and only these were carried back to Antioch and laid in a sarcophagus. . . . Now these things happened on the 13th before the Kalends of January, when Sura and Senecio for the second time were consuls among the Romans.

"Having with tears beheld these things with our own eyes, and having watched all night long in the house, and having often and again entreated the Lord with supplication on our knees to confirm the faith of us weak men after what had passed, when we had fallen asleep for a while, some of us suddenly beheld the blessed Ignatius standing by and embracing us, while by others again he was seen praying over us, and by others dropping with sweat, as if he were come from a hard struggle, and were standing by the Lord's side with much boldness and unutterable glory. And being filled with joy at the sight and comparing the visions of our dreams, after singing hymns to God, the Giver of good things, and lauding the holy man, we have signified unto you both the

day and the time, that we may gather ourselves together at the season of the martyrdom and hold communion with the athlete and valiant martyr of Christ, who trampled the devil under foot, and accomplished the race of his Christian devotion in Christ Jesus our Lord, through Whom, and with Whom, is the glory and power with the Father, with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen!"*

But we must dwell for a brief space upon those "seven authentic letters" which come to us as a breath from the very heart of the early Christian Church, telling us something of the hopes which inspired, of the fears which perplexed, of the faith which strengthened and encouraged the little communities of Christians, in the years which immediately succeeded the "passing" of S. John, the last, and perhaps the greatest, of the Apostolic band. Those seven letters, which have come down to us in so wonderful a manner through the eighteen hundred years of storm and stress, through the age of persecution, through the yet longer ages of war and confusion—what were they?

The whole seven taken together, as we have said, are barely as long as the two Epistles to the Corinthians of S. Paul. They are, each of them, with the exception of that written to the Ephesians, which is of some length, but little things after all. They cannot be termed treatises on any definite subject; they are not reasoned out, they bear evidently the marks of haste and hurry. But their passionate expressions, full of love, anxious care, burning faith, spring evidently from the heart of the writer, and that writer no ordinary man. He was, we see clearly, one long accustomed to rule, to organise, and to teach. His theological system, to use a later term, was a definite one. His mind was fully made up on the questions of the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity, as we should expect in one who had been the pupil of Apostles, trained by Peter or Paul or John, not improbably a hearer of each of these disciples of the Lord.

There is a certain sameness in five of the seven epistles,

* Acts of Martyrdom of S. Ignatius (the so-called Antiochene Acts), 5, 6, 7.

viz. those written to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Philadelphians, and Smyrnæans. That addressed to Polycarp is, as might be expected, more personal in its character. The letter to the Romans is quite different from the other six. It is almost wholly taken up with thoughts connected with his martyrdom. In many respects it is the most remarkable and interesting of the seven, and has enjoyed by far the widest popularity.

To go a little farther into detail, in the five above alluded to as being cast somewhat in the same mould the Churches addressed are solemnly warned to beware of heresy, of false doctrine. And the special error, which evidently gave the great teacher uneasiness lest the pure faith of the communities should be endangered, was a strange wandering from the original Evangelic teaching respecting the Person of Christ. In theological language the heresy against which Ignatius warns his readers is termed "Docetism," a heresy which questioned the reality of Christ's humanity, of His actual birth and life and death in the flesh, maintaining that "the body with which Christ seemed to be clothed was a phantom, and that all his actions were only in appearances."

"Docetism" is a danger which has long passed away; to us it is but "the shadow of smoke, is the dream of a dream"; yet all the writings which have come to us from the teachers of the second century show us that in those early days this curious error constituted a very real peril to Christianity. Strong anti-Docetic statements are repeated in similar language in five of the epistles, such as "Jesus Christ . . . who was truly born and ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth, moreover, was truly raised from the death. . . . But if it were, as certain persons, who are godless, that is unbelievers, say, that He suffered only in semblance . . . why am I in bonds? and why also do I desire to fight with wild beasts? So I die in vain! Truly then I lie against the Lord. . . . Shun ye, therefore, those

vile offshoots that gender a deadly fruit, whereof if a man taste forthwith he dieth. For these men are not the Father's planting." (Ep. to the Trallians, 9, 10, 11.)

And again, "I know and believe that He was in the flesh even after the Resurrection; and when He came to Peter and his company He said unto them, 'Lay hold and handle me, and see that I am not a demon without a body,' and straightway they touched him and they believed." (Ep. to the Smyrnæans, 3.)

But besides the *reality* of the Passion of the Lord, on which, in view of the heretical suggestions of the Docetic teachers, Ignatius laid so much stress, the great Bishop, in five of his seven letters, was peculiarly urgent in pressing home the supreme necessity for ecclesiastical order, which he considered as the great bulwark against doctrinal errors.

None of the eminent Church teachers in any age has so persistently advocated the authority of the threefold ministry as has Ignatius. In the eyes of the Martyr-Bishop of Antioch, who was the first authoritative mouthpiece of the Church after the passing away of S. John, the threefold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons was, to use the words of his latest scholarly biographer, "the husk, the shell, which protects the precious kernel of the truth." So repeated and so urgent were his charges here, that it is difficult in a brief summary to select from the letters even the more telling. "It becometh you," he writes to the Ephesians, "to run in harmony with the mind of the bishop . . . for your honourable presbytery, which is worthy of God, is attuned to the bishop, even as its strings to a lyre."

To the Magnesians: "As the Lord did nothing without the Father (being united with Him), either by Himself or by the Apostles, so neither do you anything without the bishop and the presbyters."

To the Philadelphians: "I cried out, when I was among you, I spake with a loud voice, with God's own voice—Give you heed to the bishop, and the presbytery and the deacons."

To the Smyrnæans: "Let that be held a valid Eucharist, which is under the bishop, or one to whom he shall have

committed it. It is not lawful, apart from the bishop, either to baptise, or to hold a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve, this is well pleasing also to God, that everything which you shall do may be safe and valid."

And these, we must remember, are only a few quotations from a number of like sayings in the letters. Well might reformers like Calvin, who, no doubt largely owing to the force of circumstances, had adopted Presbyterianism, and, later, our English Milton, impugn the authenticity of the Ignatian letters. This they did, as is well known, in language of reckless invective; for if the seven famous Ignatian epistles were accepted as genuine, it would follow that the form of Church government adopted by the advocates of Presbyterianism was absolutely at variance with the Church order generally recognised *circa* A.D. 100–10, and so strongly commended by one of the most honoured and revered of the Church teachers and leaders of that age.

Of the genuineness and authenticity of the seven letters, from which the above quotations are taken, and in which many similar passages to those quoted above occur, there is no longer any room for doubt.

But among the seven there is one letter in which neither is heresy combated, nor the necessity of ecclesiastical order enjoined. In the epistle to the Romans the writer had in mind another object—his coming martyrdom. It is coloured with his hopes, his fears, his outlook. His hopes are all centred in the glorious agony which lay before him; his fears are summed up in a strange, nervous dread that he might never, owing to some mistaken kindness of friends, or through the pity of his enemies, attain to that goal of martyrdom he so passionately longed to reach; his gaze was directed alone to the other world, where he would meet his loved Lord face to face.

It was, indeed, a strange, wonderful letter. He looked forward to the supreme hour of the arena, feeling that the great example he hoped to set would be a help to the cause he loved with his whole soul. If only they would keep silence and leave him alone to die, he would be "a word of God,

instead of a mere cry." He shrank from no suffering, fully realising what lay before him in that dread arena. "Let me," was his passionate utterance, "be given to the wild beasts; for through them can I attain unto God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread (of Christ); rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my sepulchre, and may leave no part of my body behind. . . . It is good for me to die for Jesus Christ rather than to reign over the farthest bounds of the earth. Him I seek Who died on our behalf, Him I desire Who rose again (for our sakes)." Curious, indeed, was his fear lest his Roman friends, through a mistaken kindness, a too officious zeal, should obtain a reversal of his awful sentence. To Ignatius death was life, and life, as we commonly understand it, was death. "Do not hinder me," he pleaded, "from living" (as he understood living), "do not desire my death, . . . suffer me to receive the pure light; when I am come thither, then I shall be a man: let me be an imitator of the Passion of my God. . . . Never shall I find an opportunity such as this to attain unto God. . . . I dread your very love, lest it do me an injury. . . . Come fire and cross and grapplings with wild beasts, cuttings and manglings, wrenchings of bones, hacking of limbs, crushings of my whole body, come cruel tortures of the devils to assail me—only be it mine to attain unto Jesus Christ." Much more like this is to be found in this strange letter. It is all one passionate longing cry for martyrdom.

Very striking was the effect of this epistle of Ignatius to the Romans. It crystallised in words, so to speak, the spirit of the early Church in the face of death, that spirit which so dismayed, disturbed, made anxious great Pagan statesmen like the Emperor Marcus. Men realised that the feeling which despised death, the feeling so strikingly and so early voiced by Ignatius, was thoroughly earnest, was very real and genuine. This intense conviction that death was life, that death would unite them for ever to their Lord, was the victory which overcame the world, which eventually swept away the old Pagan cult, and which, after two centuries

and a half of combat, enthroned Christianity as the world's religion.

Although it is clear that the seven letters of Ignatius enjoyed from early times a wide popularity, this epistle to the Romans, which preached martyrdom for the faith as the true life, as the pure light, as the perfect discipleship, which exalted the martyr's crown as a better prize than even the kingdoms of the world, in this respect excelled them all. It appears to have been even circulated as a separate tractate. It has been happily termed a sort of "Martyr's Manual," a *vade mecum* of martyrs in subsequent ages. In the earliest authentic contemporary records of martyrdom that we possess, as for instance in the letter to the Philomelians, written from Smyrna immediately after the death of its great Bishop Polycarp, *circa* A.D. 157, in the pathetic story, evidently compiled by a contemporary, of the persecutions at Lyons and Vienne, in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas at Carthage, in the Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs, its reflection is clearly seen. It was one of those pieces of early Christian literature which impressed itself with strange power on the thought of the Church of the age of persecution; and the secret of its widespread influence must be largely sought and found in its language, true as it was passionate, the faithful echo of the spirit which lived in that early Church, and was ever whispering that for the Christian "to live was Christ, but to die was gain"; that while for a Christian teacher to abide in the flesh was perhaps needful for the brethren, yet "to depart and be with Christ was far better."

CHAPTER VI.

TRAJAN AND HADRIAN.

SECTION I.—PLINY AND TRAJAN.

In completing our picture of Polycarp, we have anticipated a somewhat distant date; since his life was a long one, and stretched from the days of the Apostles well into the middle of the second century. The materials for our picture were not numerous, nor abundant, but they sufficed for our purpose and, what is of the highest importance, were absolutely authentic.

Now, however, we must retrace our steps, and see what we can gather respecting the fortunes of the Church between the year of Ignatius' martyrdom, *circa* A.D. 107–10 and the date of Polycarp's death, *circa* A.D. 157.

Anything like a consecutive and detailed history of the Church during the age of persecution, especially during the first and second centuries, is impossible. There are no contemporary annals, no chronicles of events to assist us in such a work.

What we do possess are a few contemporary writings of unimpeachable genuineness, and a few contemporary notes from Pagan writers. Out of these we construct our story; but the writings which have come down to us are after all but few and fragmentary, and the notices fitful, touching only certain years, and affecting only certain localities. Still, there are enough of these flashes of light amidst the darkness which shrouds the early years of the Church's existence for us to form some conception of the marvellously rapid progress of the superhuman courage and endurance, of the

widespread quiet influence, of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth in those far back years of the first and second centuries.

In quite the early part of the second century, when the memory of S. John, who had only passed away some dozen years before, was still fresh and vivid; in the comparatively early days of Polycarp's long episcopate at Smyrna, just after the long drawn out tragedy of Ignatius had been played in the cities of Proconsular Asia and in Rome; another and a strong light is flashed upon the then condition of Christianity. A light from a very different source; proceeding from no treasured letters of a martyred Christian leader, from no fragment of the correspondence of an early Christian bishop which has survived the wear and tear of eighteen centuries, from no precious memories preserved to us by an Irenæus, or gathered up by the pious and scholarly care of an Eusebius, but from the very heart of the Imperial Pagan Government of the day

In the year 112 the younger Pliny filled the important post of proprætor or governor of the large province of Bithynia-Pontus. This wide district, roughly speaking, included the countries of modern Asia Minor, from the coasts which lie opposite to Constantinople to a point some eighty or more miles beyond Sinope on the Black Sea, and stretched far into the interior to the borders of Proconsular Asia and Galatia. Pliny was a noble Roman of high character, a statesman and lawyer of great reputation, who enjoyed the confidence and friendship of the Emperor Trajan, the master of the Roman world. Trajan, whose policy to a great degree determined the relations between Christianity and the Empire during well nigh the whole of the second century, ranks high on the list of the good and great Emperors—not a long list, alas! This powerful sovereign in many respects has been the object of exaggerated praise, for his life was sadly stained by not a few dark crimes and by shameless immorality, as well as by his love of war and foreign conquest. But the sharp contrast which, on the whole, his wise and far-seeing administration presented to the tyrannical and wicked rule

TRAJAN.

From a Bust found in the Campagna, now in the British Museum.

of many of his predecessors and successors, has won him unstinted adulation not only from Pagan but from Christian writers. It cannot be denied, however, that his government of the vast Roman world was just and his measures moderate, and generally tending to stillness at home.

The reply of such an Emperor to his friend the Proprætor Pliny on the attitude to be observed by the Government towards Christians, crystallising as it did the Imperial policy for a long period, is of the highest importance to any history which deals with the early story of the Church.

A somewhat perplexing question had arisen in Pliny's province. The proprætor felt that the decision once for all of the points at issue would have far-reaching consequences; and therefore he wrote for instructions to his friend and master, Trajan, whom he regarded, and rightly, as a very able and far-sighted administrator. Our knowledge of the transaction is derived from a volume in which the correspondence* of Pliny with Trajan is preserved.

We learn from the letter of Pliny to the Emperor that the new religion (Christianity) had spread so widely in his province of Bithynia, that not merely in the cities, but also in the villages and rural districts, the temples were well-nigh deserted and the trades connected with the elaborate system of sacrifice were being rapidly ruined. It was evident in Pliny's mind that the wonderful progress of the new religion bade fair sooner or later to upset the existing conditions of Roman society. Ought not, then, some severe check to be at once imposed upon a society which threatened to bring about such disturbing influences? From Pliny's letter we see that the grave matter which he referred to the Emperor had already passed through two stages. The first stage had included a number of accusations directed evidently against the more prominent adherents of the faith.

* Pliny: *Epist. ad Traj.*, 96–97. This correspondence has been pronounced by the universal verdict of scholars and critics as undoubtedly genuine. The MS. containing it was only brought to light *circa* A.D. 1500. It contains a unique picture of provincial administration in the Empire early in the second century.

The accused appear all without exception to have boldly confessed their faith, and these the proprætor, in accordance with the acknowledged and universal precedents of Roman procedure in the case of Christianity, at once condemned to death if they were provincials; those who were Roman citizens he sent to Rome for the Emperor's final decision.

But there was a second stage. A further development of the matter had taken place, in which decision on the part of the proprætor was not so easy or simple a matter. Emboldened probably by the success of their first information, the informers, through the instrumentality of an anonymous writing, denounced to the Roman governor a very large number of other persons alleged to be Christians.

Further trials were the result of this information. In this second group of trials, different from the first group (when the accused doubtless were prominent Christians firm and steadfast in their faith), there were some who entirely denied that they had ever been Christians at all; others of the accused, terrified at the thought of death, forthwith recanted, offered incense before the statue of Trajan the Emperor, and reviled Christ.

Pliny hesitated whether or not he should let such repentant persons go scot-free without punishment, and referred the question to the Emperor. But before the reference was sent to Rome the proprætor caused a searching inquiry to be made into the peculiar life led by these Christians who were so widely hated. Had the persons, for instance, who had so readily when threatened with death abjured the religion, been guilty in the exercise of their peculiar rites, of any of the secret crimes with which their enemies so freely charged them, such as child-murder, cannibalism, and divers dark offences against morality? Such offences as these, had they been committed, surely demanded some punishment (short, perhaps, of death), even though the offender had repented. Those who recanted were strictly examined, and two *ministræ*, who occupied some official position (deaconesses, no doubt) among the Christians, being slaves, were interrogated under torture.

The results of these inquiries Pliny transmitted to the Emperor, together with his opinion. He (Pliny) was satisfied that these secret charges of wickedness were absolutely without foundation. He reported that the lives led by the professors of the unlawful religion were innocent and simple. He transmitted, too, in his report a fairly accurate, though somewhat meagre outline of Christian worship and life which he had gathered in the course of his searching inquiries. The votaries of the unlawful religion were in the habit of meeting before sunrise on a certain day, when they used to sing hymns together in praise of Christ as God. They had the custom, too, of binding themselves by a solemn oath (Sacramentum) or undertaking never to commit theft, adultery, or any breach of trust, and subsequently after the religious service was ended they would gather together for an innocent repast. He concludes that this Christianity was nothing more than a "superstitio prava immodica," a kind of superstitious worship, utterly un-Roman; hurtful to the State in that it inculcated a worship hostile to that which was sanctioned by the Government, and formed an integral part of the life led by the loyal citizens of the Empire.*

Pliny besides pointed out that in consequence of his energetic (persecuting) measures a great improvement had already taken place in the provinces. The gods of Rome were now being again worshipped by crowds who had deserted their sanctuaries, as was shown, too, by a marked improvement, already noticeable, in the sale of the fodder for the beasts kept for sacrifice at the heathen altars, and thus a grave injury to lawful trades and industries which were under the patronage of the State was in process of being remedied.

The answer of Trajan, without replying formally to each of Pliny's references, gives a general summary of the policy which he desired should be pursued in the relations of the Empire

* The Roman religion, the worship of the gods of Rome, has been accurately described as "the expression of Roman patriotism, the bond of Roman unity, and the pledge of Roman prosperity."

to the Christian sect. First the Emperor confirms Pliny's view of the precedents heretofore followed by the State; in the case of the accused persisting in styling himself a Christian after due warning, the extreme penalty of death would follow. In the various instances suggested by Pliny which might be pleaded as supplying extenuating circumstance, such as youth or sex, a free hand was left to the magistrate. Penitence, recantation, willing public compliance with the rites of the Roman religion, were in all cases to be deemed sufficient. An accused Christian thus purged must at once be set at liberty. No doubt the Emperor was here largely influenced by Pliny's strongly expressed conviction of the innocence of the Christian life and the harmless nature of the rites practised by the sect.

Then follows a very merciful direction, which plainly shows that the great Emperor was personally averse to any new harsh persecuting measures being devised against his Christian subjects, if by any means these could be avoided. The governor of a province was not to search for Christians, nor to entertain any anonymous accusations. Only in the event of a formal accuser coming publicly forward must the charge be formally investigated; but in the case of the charge being proven (and no recantation being forthcoming), the full penalty must, in accordance with Roman precedent, be inflicted.

Briefly to sum up the signification of the Roman precedent upon which Pliny acted in the case of his death sentences: The action of Nero, A.D. 64–8, first determined the relations of the Empire towards Christianity. From that date the profession of the religion of Jesus Christ was illegal, and its votaries were liable to the penalty of death. Under Vespasian the precedent of Nero was again considered, and confirmed in a more definite shape. The correspondence of Pliny with Trajan, just dwelt upon, marks a third stage and shows us how in A.D. 112–13 the question of the relations of Christianity and the Empire was again under consideration. It was once more, as we shall see, considered by the Emperor Hadrian a few years later; who, however, scarcely

altered the line of conduct to be pursued by the magistrates as laid down by Trajan.*

The State correspondence of the Emperor Trajan and his friend and subordinate the Proprætor Pliny, possesses for the scholar a peculiar importance, as it shows what in A.D. 112 were the exact relations between the Imperial Government and the Christian Church; indicating, too, the view which an upright statesmen and lawyer had formed of the sect which in so marvellous a manner had taken such rapid root in the complex society of the Empire—a view apparently partly endorsed by a wise and able Emperor.† For the general student it is of yet greater interest, for it enables him, on the evidence of a Pagan official of the highest character and ability, to form an estimate of the great numbers and general influence in an important province of the Empire

* *The Church and the Roman Empire.* Professor Ramsay, chapters ix.-xiv.; where the Imperial relations with Christianity in the first and second centuries are discussed at some length.

† Professor Ramsay (*Ibid.*, chap. x. and xi.), in the course of a long and exhaustive analysis of Pliny's letter and the Emperor's answer, suggests that Pliny's intention in consulting the Emperor evidently involved something more than a desire to ascertain Trajan's views. The governor of Bythinia and Pontus wished and hoped that the State policy towards the Christians should be reconsidered, and he went as far as he could without directly suggesting it to the Emperor. Attention is especially called to the striking difference in the colour of the latter part of Pliny's letter from that observable in the first part. The attitude of the writer is changed; the first part begins with direct condemnation, but this passes into a question which virtually asks, "Should he punish Christians at all?" It seems as though "the writer is desirous to have the policy changed, and yet shrinks from seeming in any way to suggest a change." This scarcely veiled benevolent wish on the part of Pliny evidently sprang from the results of the searching examination he had conducted into the life and character of the accused Christians.

The letter of Pliny, it is clear, exercised considerable influence on the Emperor, who, while clearly regarding the proscription of Christians as a fundamental principle of Imperial policy which he did not choose to alter, still in his reply inaugurated a policy milder in practice that that before pursued towards the Christians.

Ramsay with great force dwells on the pleasant thought that Pliny's noble, although cautious pleading for the Christians, emanating from his sense of what was just and right, was the deliberate work of one "whose life gives us a finer conception than any other of the character of the Roman gentleman under the Empire."

of a sect of religionists whom the official, of whose testimony he was availing himself, distrusted and somewhat disliked.

We have already seen how in Italy, and especially in Rome at a yet earlier date, in the year 64, the number of Christians was very considerable; so large that Tacitus speaks of the Christian victims of Nero as "a great multitude." We know, too, from the letters of Clement to the Corinthians how that sorely tried Roman community, decimated by persecution, had again before the first century closed become a great power among the Christians. We dwelt on the flourishing churches of the populous and wealthy Proconsular Asia, when we spoke of the seven letters of Ignatius and the work of Polycarp; and now we learn incidentally from the correspondence of a well-known provincial governor with the Emperor Trajan, that Christianity, before the years 112–13, had penetrated into the more remote districts of northern Asia Minor; and that the religion of Jesus in the provinces of Bithynia and Pontus had taken such a hold on the masses of the population in the villages and rural districts, as well as in the cities, that the temples of the Roman gods were almost deserted, and the sacrificial ritual in their sacred shrines was interrupted to such an extent as to interfere gravely with the traders, who depended largely on the sale of victims provided for the numerous Pagan sacrifices.

Thus from these chance notices we can gather some idea as to the progress Christianity had made—at least in those countries which bordered upon or were adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea—in the eighty years which followed the first preaching of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus by the Apostles in Jerusalem, the city where His deadly enemies were the ruling power.

SECTION II.—HADRIAN: FIRST PERIOD.

Some twelve years after the famous rescript of Trajan to the Proconsul Pliny on the subject of the treatment of Christians formally accused before a State tribunal, another rescript was issued from the Imperial chancery by Trajan's successor in

the Empire, Hadrian, on the same subject. The evidence for the genuineness of this second rescript has been carefully sifted, and the opinion of most competent scholars* is practically unanimous in pronouncing it an authentic document. It is quoted in full by Justin Martyr in his first "Apology" addressed *circa* A.D. 140–5 to the Emperor Antoninus Pius; and it is mentioned by Melito, Bishop of Sardis, in his Apology addressed to Marcus Aurelius some thirty years later.

The occasion which called forth Hadrian's rescript was a letter addressed to the Emperor by Silvanus Granianus, proconsul of Asia, dwelling upon the injustice of yielding to popular clamour and condemning Christians who were guilty of no crime, simply because they were Christians, on the information of irresponsible and prejudiced informers; similar remonstrances seem to have been made by other provincial governors to Hadrian. The letter of Granianus was written *circa* A.D. 123–4, and the Emperor's reply was sent in the following year to Minucius Fundanus, who had succeeded Granianus in the government of the province of Asia. It would seem on first thoughts that there was scarcely occasion for any provincial governor to consult the Emperor anew on a question which had been definitely settled about twelve years before by Trajan's rescript addressed to Pliny. But in truth the situation had considerably changed in the interval. The Christian communities were steadily increasing; popular jealousy and discontent had grown too; and in some districts the popular unrest had evidently attained to disturbing proportions. It is clear, also, that some of the more just and generous among the Roman magistrates were grieved at having to yield to a popular clamour which called upon them to persecute and to harry innocent, law-abiding persons. Hence their fresh inquiries addressed to the Emperor to learn his will in the matter. The Emperor Hadrian—whose character will be presently briefly discussed—"the Olympian god who roamed over the Empire looking into every religion,

* So Mommsen, Lightfoot, Ramsay, Allard, who all agree as to its absolute genuineness.

initiated into various mysteries, was quite alive to the fact that the State religion was probably a sham,* and looked at as a religion was a failure; but he knew also that it was the keystone of the Imperial policy, and he could not, or would not, face the task of altering it. He leaves the religious question quite open, and lets the religious sects fight it out for him to watch. In this ordinance about a religion, he never alludes to the idea of religion. No other person could have written such a rescript, and without any evidence we might have identified it as Hadrian's."

The Imperial document followed pretty closely the rescript of Trajan, but it changed some of the directions, and the changes were on the lines suggested by the proconsul to whose query it was the formal reply. So far it improved the position of the Christians. It required, in the case of a Christian prosecution, definite evidence, and further it ordered that if the prosecutor failed to prove his case he should be exposed to severe punishment. The whole rescript was studiously vague, leaving much to the magistrate's discretion. The original principle, however, was still left in Hadrian's rescript, viz. that if the governor was satisfied that the accused was a Christian, his plain duty was at once to direct his execution.

Still the discouragement of mere popular clamour, and the severe penalty to which an informer might be subjected if his accusation could not be clearly proven, for a time made the position of the followers of Jesus in the Empire more tolerable, especially in those provinces where a just and generous governor bore sway. It seems probable that at one period of Hadrian's reign the mind of the Emperor was somewhat influenced in their favour. But the gleam of Imperial favour was, as we shall see, but transitory.

It will be worth while to give a brief sketch of the career and character of this master of the Roman world from

* Prof. Ramsay, *The Church and the Roman Empire*, chap. xiv. This epithet ("a sham"), in the opinion of the writer of this history, is too strong a one. It is doubtful if the Emperors who followed Augustus looked upon the religion of Rome as a "sham." This is discussed later in Chapter V.

A.D. 117 to A.D. 138; twenty-one of those momentous years when the foundation stories of the Christian Church were being laid in all the provinces of the Empire by the early builders—with much anxiety, often in suffering, but always in sure hope. Hadrian in many respects was a typical Roman of the highest class; and his conduct towards the Christian sect, which in his days had already expanded into a somewhat important community in the Empire, was a fair example of the general policy of the Imperial chancery in its dealings with Christians all through those years of the second century when a kindly, well-disposed Emperor was on the throne. How quickly, without apparent provocation, the benevolent, kindly feeling which showed itself in a partial toleration of an unlawful religion, which it must be remembered Christianity ever was, could change for the worse, is shown in the harsh persecuting policy which broke out in the closing years of this Emperor's reign.

Hadrian, a favourite and highly trusted relation of Trajan, was only formally adopted as his successor to the Empire in the last hours of the great Emperor's life; and some even doubt if this formal adoption was not rather the work of Trajan's wife, the Empress Plotina, than of Trajan himself.

There was no real opposition, however, to his succession, and his reign was singularly free from all plots and rebellions. We except, of course, the great Jewish revolt which happened far on in the peaceful and prosperous reign. Hadrian was an exceptionally brilliant genius; comparatively little has come down to us from Pagan chronicles respecting his inner life, but we are told that he was at once painter and sculptor, musician, poet, and grammarian. The number of cities which bear his name in different provinces of the Empire demonstrate the truth of the assertion that he was an enthusiastic builder; an antiquarian, too, who prided himself on his genius for research. After making all allowances for the too flattering estimate of his abilities, which naturally would be made by the contemporaries of an all-powerful sovereign, there is no doubt of the real powers of the Emperor

Hadrian, powers which he loved to exercise generally for the public weal. His government was distinguished by innumerable acts of public munificence; countless cities were beautified and adorned by such works of utility as aqueducts and baths. History relates how other great princes in different ages spent a considerable portion of their lives in travel. But while the distant foreign expeditions of Alexander the Great and Cæsar, of Charlemagne and Saint Louis, of Charles V. and the great Napoleon, were solely for the purposes of war, the Emperor Hadrian is, perhaps, the solitary example recorded in history of a sovereign spending fifteen years in visiting his vast dominions solely in the interests of peace. Memorials of this strange reign of Imperial travel can be traced in Britain, Gaul, Africa, Egypt, and those wide provinces of Asia which in the great days of Italian supremacy were under the rule of Rome.

His character was made up of strange and startling contrasts. Usually almost an ascetic in the rigorous plainness of his private repasts, he was famous, too, in that age of self-indulgence and luxury for the wild excesses of his public banquets. Again, he prided himself on his knowledge of philosophy and his powers of philosophic argument, and yet we find him dabbling in occult and hidden mysteries, filling the position of high Pontiff as well as of an Arval brother, of one who was initiated into the mysteries of Eleusis and the secrets of the life to come.*

Hadrian was the author and inspirer of much wise and benevolent legislation; more especially the sad lot of the vast

* If the well-known lines on the fate of the soul after death with which Hadrian is credited, were written by him in his last days, he had gathered surely but little comfort from his Eleusinian teachers.

"Animula, vagula, blandula
Comes hospesque corporis
Quæ nunc abibis in loca?
Pallidula frigida nudula
Nec ut soles, dabis jocos."

Yet he once was very near those who could have given an answer to his question.

HADRIAN.

In the British Museum.

slave class, the curse of Rome, was sensibly ameliorated by his wise and merciful laws; yet the sovereign's private life was disfigured with shameless, even with nameless, immorality. Again, it is difficult to pronounce whether or no mercy or cruelty were the special features of Hadrian's complex character. The assassination of prominent personages who might have proved formidable competitors for the purple at the outset of his reign shocked and dismayed Rome, and at first fears were entertained in the metropolis that the age of the tyranny of a Nero or a Domitian was about to be repeated. But many years of a comparatively gentle and just rule followed this first burst of reckless bloodshed, and the early cruelties which disfigured the beginnings of his rule were in time forgotten. Then in the last years of his brilliant reign the cruel spirit seemed once more to awaken in the failing Emperor, *circa* A.D. 134–5, or a little earlier. The shock of the Jewish war and its dreadful slaughter; failure of strength, accompanied with ever increasing pain and weariness; have been pleaded as excuses for this changed and sombre spirit which overshadowed the three or four years preceding the Emperor's death. A long list of proscriptions in which some of the noblest of the Romans perished, among whom some of his own kinsfolk were included, alarmed and disturbed the public mind; no one was safe from the jealous suspicions of the sick tyrant, to whose insane and baseless terrors the highest and the lowest in their turn would fall victims. It was a melancholy close to a very brilliant and generally prosperous rule. His many good deeds were completely forgotten in the gloomy reign of terror of the closing years, and he passed away amidst the execrations of the people over whom he had long ruled wisely and well. The Senate even wrote publicly to condemn his memory, and would have indignantly refused to grant him the usual posthumous divine honours paid to a dead Emperor, had not the devoted piety of his adopted successor, known in history as Antoninus Pius, disarmed their wrath, and induced them very reluctantly to give him his place among the gods of Rome.

It was during this melancholy period that his conduct towards the Christians completely changed, and the bitter persecution of which we shall presently speak was directed against those quiet and ever loyal subjects of the Empire; adding not a few to the long list of martyrs and confessors of the faith, some of whose names have been preserved in the Church's Martyrologies.

SECTION III.—HADRIAN: THE TRAGEDY OF THE JEWS.

It was in the reign of Hadrian that the final expatriation of the Jews from Jerusalem and its neighbourhood took place, under circumstances accompanied with the most awful bloodshed.

The story of the Jews for a hundred years after the tragedy of Golgotha is one of the saddest in history. Three times the passionate hatred of the race flamed out in open revolt against their Roman conquerors and oppressors. The numbers who perished in these Jewish wars are possibly exaggerated, but there is no doubt that they must be counted at least by tens of thousands.

The great and crowning victory of Titus and the destruction of the Temple and part of the city in A.D. 70, with its frightful carnage, did not prove sufficient to break the stubborn spirit of resistance. In the reign of Trajan a grave revolt took place, and spread over Cyprus, part of Egypt, and North Africa. This was got under; but a far more formidable rebellion stained the latter years of the comparatively peaceful period of Hadrian with literal torrents of blood. The scene of this last insurrection was Judæa, and especially the immediate neighbourhood of the desecrated holy city. In this revolt or rebellion the danger to the Empire was considered so grave that Hadrian summoned from distant Britain Julius Severus, who was reputed to be the ablest of his generals, and appointed him as commander of the Roman army of Judæa. The fierce war—a war not merely waged for national independence, but further embittered by the burning desire

to rescue their holiest Hebrew sanctuary from Pagan desecration—was protracted for a considerable period. In its course, fifty strongholds were stormed, nine hundred and eighty-five cities and villages were razed to the ground, five hundred and eighty thousand persons are said to have perished by the sword, by famine, or by pestilence. So say the chroniclers of this deadly struggle, who have probably somewhat exaggerated the numbers of cities razed and strongholds destroyed. What remained of the holy city, already partially overthrown by Titus, was levelled to the ground. The site of the Temple was symbolically sown with salt, and a new Pagan city arose on the site of the loved Zion, under the new name of Ælia, with its Roman theatre, its baths, and its temples; the image of the Emperor being erected side by side with that of Jupiter Capitolinus. The Jew was forbidden ever to enter the new Pagan city; only once a year was he suffered to come near, that he might weep and mourn over the grave of his vanished hopes. In the Jewish liturgies the memory of their last and crushing desolation was preserved by solemn prayers, when on the anniversary of the victory of Hadrian the Lord of Hosts was supplicated to punish this second Nebuchadnezzar, who was said to have destroyed four hundred and eighty synagogues of the chosen people.

The result of this final and complete destruction of Jerusalem, and desolation of the Holy Land, was far-reaching in its effects upon Christianity. The last link in the connection of the Church and the Synagogue was now snapped. The link in question had been the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem. Dating from the days of the Apostles, the Church of Jerusalem had ever been presided over by one who was a Jew by birth. The community still exacted circumcision from its members; it observed the Jewish fasts and feasts, while at the same time it taught faithfully the fundamental Christian doctrines. The Church of Jerusalem was respected and venerated throughout Christendom as the Church which not only owed its foundation to the Apostles, but was sanctified by the blood of the first martyr. To the Jewish convert it was especially dear, as it still practised the rites and ceremonies

of the chosen race. But after the war of Hadrian, the Jew of Palestine was for ever banished from the scenes of the old Hebrew glories, and the Christian Church of the Circumcision from henceforth virtually ceased to exist; what remained of it was soon incorporated with other foreign Gentile communities, but there was no longer a Jewish centre in Christendom.

A strange anomaly, however, here presents itself to the historian of the early Christian Church, and one that must be at all events briefly dwelt upon, as it tells us something of the position of Christians in the second and third centuries in the Pagan world of Rome. It discloses something of the feelings generally entertained towards them by the Roman Government. It helps to explain some of the causes of the repeated persecutions which harassed the Church during the first two hundred and eighty years of its existence.

The Jew was the bitterest, the most stubborn foe the Roman ever encountered. Three formidable revolts against the Roman rule in the times of Titus, Trajan, and Hadrian, had to be put down at an enormous expense of blood and treasure: on a smaller scale—for their powers of resistance had been well-nigh stamped out—the Jews rose again in rebellion in the course of the reigns of both the Antonines and of Septimius Severus; and yet, strangely enough, we never find them prevented from worshipping in accordance with their especial tenets, during or after their repeated and serious insurrections. The Jewish race, after all its unheard-of calamities, still continued to exist, if it did not flourish, and few indeed were the Roman centres of population in the second and third centuries without a Jewish synagogue. Contrary to all the ordinary laws of history its extraordinary vitality preserved it from extinction, apparently even from diminution of its numbers; for after the fearful war of extermination under the lieutenants of Hadrian we still find the Jew in such centres as Rome, Alexandria, or Carthage, living and trading much as before the tremendous calamities. Nor was he persecuted. Unhindered, he went to the synagogue, openly he practised all the observances of his cherished religion. Later we even find the Emperor

Severus specially sanctioning the assumption of municipal offices by the Jews, and certainly in their case formally dispensing with the ordinary Roman religious rites which invariably formed part of the ceremonies attached to such offices. We never hear of a Jew being haled before a magistrate on account of the religion which it was well known he professed, never of his being required to swear by the "Genius of Cæsar," or to scatter grains of incense on the altar of a Pagan deity.

On the other hand the Christian—against whom no charge of disloyalty to Cæsar was ever advanced, who in Rome, as in the most remote provinces, was ever the strict law-abiding citizen, who never shared in any rising or rebellion against the Emperor or the constituted powers of the State—during the two hundred and eighty years which followed the Resurrection of the Master, lived with a sword ever suspended by a very slender strand above his head in a state of perpetual outlawry, with the sentence of condemnation ever ready to be launched against him, with the hideous penalty of a cruel death prepared to be exacted of him; a sentence and a penalty only temporarily suspended at certain periods of careless toleration or of fitful generosity.

What was the secret of this strange contrast between the behaviour of the Roman authorities in all the provinces of the great Empire in the case of the turbulent Jew, and their behaviour in the case of the patient, law-abiding Christian?

The truth was that the Imperial Government, when once the Hebrew nationality was destroyed, ceased altogether to fear the Jews. They seemed but the poor remnant of a vanquished nation, interesting now rather than formidable, welcome always as traders, money-lenders, and the like, useful especially as the bitter, irreconcilable foes of the Christian, whom the Romans *did* fear, with, perhaps, an indefinable dread.

There is no doubt whatever that the dominant factor in the strange hatred of the Romans for everything connected with Christianity was fear. The trader, it is true, often disliked the Christian with a sordid antipathy, because he spoiled the various markets open to him in connection with

the sacrifices and ritual belonging to the gods of Rome; but the statesman, the serious thinker who in his heart, not always but at times, was too conscious that the religion of the Empire was largely unreal, had an uneasy conviction that in the proscribed and hated faith there was real life and genuine power. Those who were acquainted with something of its wondrous story were well aware how rapidly, in spite of the crushing disabilities under which the members of the proscribed sect ever lived, it had gained ground, and was ever gaining ground, not in Rome only, but in most of the cities and provinces of the vast Empire.

There were many who, with unfeigned dismay, watched its quiet, silent, onward march, and who marked well its marvellous and ever growing influence. Scarcely a family, as the second century waned, but some member in it belonged to the secret powerful community of Christians, and that member—slave or mistress, freedman or master—from the moment of becoming a Christian became also at once the unresting, untiring emissary of the faith. No threat seemed to terrify those Christians, no punishment, however terrible, had any effect on them—torture and death were welcomed rather than shunned. A superhuman energy appeared to live and work in their ranks, an energy which inspired with heroic courage men and women drawn from all classes, ages, sexes; a princess of the Imperial house like Domitilla in Rome, an aged teacher like Polycarp at Smyrna, a slave girl like Blandina at Lyons, a young and cultured lady like Perpetua at Carthage, in different Imperial reigns, were similarly strengthened by this unearthly power which lived in the Christian sect.

Before such a spirit as that which inspired the humblest votaries of the new religion, and which, as time went on, showed no signs of weakness or exhaustion, the gods of Rome, who were after all, as some could not help realising, but a shadowy unreality, must surely in the end go down. And the long line of the great Roman statesmen who were persuaded that the old State religion, with its immemorial traditions, was the keystone of the Imperial policy, the policy

which had built up and was the bulwark of Rome's world-wide Empire, not unnaturally viewed Christianity as the Empire's deadliest foe, an enemy which must be stamped out, destroyed—"delenda est Carthago."

This was the secret reason of the changeless policy which persecuted the Christians whom Rome *feared*, while it spared and even favoured the Jews, whom Rome in its heart *despised*.

SECTION IV.—CHRISTIAN LIFE UNDER HADRIAN AS PRESENTED BY EARLY CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS.

We have dwelt a little on the life and character of the famous Emperor Hadrian, who certainly for the first sixteen years of his reign very gently interpreted the Imperial precedents, which with one consent determined to regard the Christian communities as composed of outlaws who had incurred the extreme penalty of the Roman law. Some have even chosen to regard Hadrian as, in one portion of his reign, positively inclined to favour the worshippers of Jesus. The tendency of his rescript to Minucius Fundanus, of which we have spoken, was certainly in this direction; for it allowed a kindly provincial governor effectually to discourage any attempt at persecution.

Encouraged, apparently, by the benevolent attitude of the all-powerful master of the Roman world, two Christian scholars ventured to approach the throne and publicly to defend the proscribed and dreaded faith. The first of these formal Apologies for Christianity was presented to Hadrian at the time of one of the Imperial visits to Athens by Quadratus, who was, some scholars think, the Quadratus distinguished for his prophetical gifts referred to by Eusebius * as a disciple of the Apostles. The work of Quadratus has not come down to us. But Eusebius has given us from it some striking sentences which suggest power and originality, and seem besides to imply that the writer had been personally acquainted with some of

* *H. E.*, iii. 37, v. 17. If, however, it is this Quadratus he must have reached a great age when he presented his "Apology" to the Emperor.

those who had seen the Lord. The passage is a very remarkable one, and runs as follows: "The works of our Saviour were ever present, for they were real; [they were] those who were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when healed and when raised, but were always present. They remained living a long time, not only whilst our Lord was on earth, but likewise when He had left the earth, so that some of these have also survived even to our own times."

The other apologist, Aristides, Eusebius describes as "a man faithfully devoted to the religion we profess." Like Quadratus, he has left to posterity a defence of the faith, addressed to the Emperor Hadrian. "Their works," says the historian, "are also preserved by a great number, even to the present day" (*i.e.* the first half of the fourth century). The "Apology" of Aristides was for ages among the lost works of early Christianity, and was only quite lately re-discovered in part and published, in an Armenian version, by the learned Armenians of the Lazarist monastery at Venice. Since then, in the year 1889, a Syriac rendering of the whole text of the long missing work was found in the library of the Convent of S. Catherine, upon Mount Sinai; and in the last decade of the nineteenth century the Greek text, with very slight modifications, was found to be embedded in the famous romance of "SS. Baalaam and Josaphat"—a writing that dates from the sixth century or earlier, and once enjoyed an extraordinary popularity. Thus, thanks to the research of modern scholars, one of the most interesting of the lost early Christian writings has been restored to us in Greek and in Syriac, and a portion of it in Armenian.*

The "Apology" of Aristides is of singular interest to the

* Compare "The Apology of Aristides" in the *Cambridge Texts and Studies* (Mr. S. Reader Harris and Canon Armitage Robinson), 1893; and Allard, *Hist. des Persécutions*, vol. i. iii. On the question whether the "Apology" of Aristides was addressed to the Emperor Hadrian or to his successor, Antoninus Pius some thirteen or fourteen years later, see *Texts and Studies*, pp. 6–12, and Allard, i. iii. pp. 253–4, the French scholar preferring the earlier date as given by Eusebius and Jerome to the latter date in the reign of Antoninus Pius, which is maintained in the *Texts and Studies*, and by Harnack and De Rossi. Hadrian reigned A.D. 117–38; Antoninus Pius succeeded him in the Empire.

historian of early Christianity; for in the course of his argument for the truth of the religion of Jesus, the writer lifts the veil which hangs over the inner life aimed at and largely followed by those Christian communities which had sprung into existence in so many of the important cities of the Empire during the thirty or forty years which followed the death of S. John. We will give some of the very words of Aristides. They are at once simple and beautiful, and give us a unique picture of early Christian life and conduct.*

"Now the Christians, O King,† by going about and seeking, have found the truth. . . . They know and believe in God the Maker of Heaven and earth . . . from whom they have received those commandments which they have engraved on their minds, which they keep in the hope and expectation of the world to come; so that on this account they do not commit adultery or fornication, they do not bear false witness . . . nor covet what is not theirs, they honour father and mother, they do good to those who are their neighbours . . . those who grieve them they comfort, and make them their friends, and they do good to them, and they do good to their enemies. Their wives, O King, are pure as virgins, and their daughters modest, and their men abstain from all unlawful wedlock and from all impurity, in the hope of the recompense that is to come in another world; but as for their servants and handmaids . . . they persuade them to become Christians from the love that they have towards them; and when they have become so, they call them without distinction brethren . . . they walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them, and they love one another. From the widows they do not turn away their countenance, and they rescue the orphan from him who does him violence; and he who has gives to him who has not, and when they see the stranger

* The extracts are translated from the Syrian version of the "Apology." See *Texts and Studies*, pp. 48-50 (above referred to), Cambridge, 1893.

† The "King" addresssed is either the Emperor Hadrian or the Emperor Antoninus Pius. It must be remembered that Eusebius and Jerome both explicitly tell us that the first of them—Hadrian—is addressed.

they bring him to their dwellings and rejoice over him as over a true brother . . . When one of their poor passes away from the world, and any one of them sees him, then he provides for his burial according to his ability; and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs, and if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him.

"And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy, and they have not abundance of necessaries, they fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with their necessary food. And they observe scrupulously the commandments of their Messiah, they live honestly and soberly as the Lord their God commanded them. Every morning and at all hours, on account of the goodness of God toward them, they praise and laud Him, and over their food and over their drink they render Him thanks. And if any righteous person of their number passes away from the world, they rejoice and give thanks to God, and they follow his body, as if he were moving from one place to another. And when a child is born to any one of them they praise God, and if again it chance to die in its infancy they praise God mightily as for one who has passed through the world without sins. And if again they see that one of their number has died in his iniquity or in his sins, over this one they weep bitterly and sigh, as over one who is about to go to his punishment. Such is the ordinance of the laws of the Christians, O King, and such their conduct.

"As men who know God, they ask from Him petitions which are proper for Him to grant and for them to receive, and thus they accomplish the course of their lives. . . . And because they acknowledge the goodnesses of God towards them, lo! on account of them there flows forth the beauty that is in the world. . . . But the good deeds which they do they do not proclaim in the ears of the multitude, and they take care that no one shall perceive them; they hide their gift as he who has found a treasure and hides it. And they labour to become righteous as those who expect to

see their Messiah and to receive from Him the promises made to them with great glory. . . . But their sayings and their ordinances, O King, and the glory of their service, and the expectation of their recompense of reward according to the doing of each one of them, which they expect in another world, thou art able to know from their writings. . . . Truly great and wonderful is their teaching, to him that is willing to examine and understand it. . . . Take now these writings and read in them, and lo! you will find that not of myself have I brought these things forward, nor as their advocate have I said them, but as I have read in their writings, these things I firmly believe, and those things that are to come. . . . I have no doubt that the world stands by reason of the intercession of Christians. . . . The Christians are honest and pious, and the truth is set before their eyes, and they are long-suffering, and therefore while they know their error (*i.e.* of the Greeks, or Pagans), and are buffeted by them, the more exceedingly do they pity them as men who are destitute of knowledge, and in their behalf they offer up prayers that they may be turned from their error. . . . Truly blessed is the race of Christians more than all men that are upon the face of the earth. . . . Their teaching is the gateway of light; let all those then approach thereunto who do not know God, and let them receive incorruptible words, those (words) which are so always and from eternity; let them therefore anticipate the dread judgment which is to come by Jesus the Messiah upon the whole race of men.

"The Apology of Aristides the philosopher is ended."

In our sketch of the inner life of the very early Church (*circa*, as we think, A.D. 124–30) which we are drawing from the picture of the life painted so vividly in this "Apology of Aristides," we must not omit the dogmatic references. These are, as we should expect in the circumstances (a Pagan sovereign and his court being addressed by the apologist), most simple and elementary in character, though they include the more important fundamental doctrines of Christianity. That a creed, very similar to the Apostles' Creed, was current in these very early Christian communities,

of which Aristides was writing, is evident; and this creed can be without difficulty reconstructed, at any events in large part, from the expressions used in the "Apology."

The fragments of Aristides' creed are as follows:—*

"We believe in one God, Almighty,
Maker of Heaven and Earth,
And in Jesus Christ, His Son,
. . . .
Born of the Virgin Mary.†
. . . .
He was pierced by the Jews,
He died and was buried,
The third day He rose again,
He ascended into heaven.
. . . .
He is about to come to judge."

Nothing is said about the sacraments, baptism or the eucharist. This omission is naturally accounted for. The document we are citing was simply an "apology" addressed to a *Pagan* auditor; whereas, in a treatise probably older than that of Aristides, the *Didaché*, or "Teaching of the Apostles," written for *believers*, the two great sacraments in question occupy a prominent place. In Aristides, however, the liturgical references are all of the most simple character, prayer and thanksgiving to God being alone dwelt upon; to these several references occur, and even details as to the nature of such prayers and thanksgiving are given—prayers for the enemies of Christians being expressly mentioned. In close connection with these general notices on prayer stands a reference to *fasting*, which is alluded to in the "Apology" as a practice

* *Texts and Studies: The Apology of Aristides* (S. Reader Harris), pp. 13, 19, 24, 25.

† The words of Aristides here on this article of his creed are: "The Christians then reckon the beginning of their religion from Jesus Christ, who is named the Son of God Most High, and it is said that God came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin took and clad Himself with flesh, and in a daughter of man there dwelt the Son of God. This is taught from that Gospel which a little while ago was spoken among them as being preached, wherein if ye also will read, ye will comprehend the power that is upon it." (Translated from the Syriac version of the "Apology.")

observed by the communities for whom the writer was pleading. Such fasting is not mentioned as "ordered," or as part of the "rule" of Christian life, but simply as a bit of generous self-denial on the part of poor folk, who were in the habit of "fasting" for two or three days so as by this means to be able to save something to provide for the needs of brethren poorer than themselves.

Similar directions on "fasting" are given in the "Similitudes" of Hermas, written only a few years later in this century, where directions are given that on the day of a fast only bread and water (the bare necessaries of life) are to be eaten, and the amount thereby saved is to be given to the needy.

One curious mark of the very early date of this writing of Aristides has been pointed out in the comparatively friendly spirit with which the Jews are alluded to. They are spoken of (in Section xiv.) as being "much nearer the truth than all the peoples, in that they worship God more exceedingly, and not His works"; in their compassionate love for others, etc. Very different, indeed, was the feeling of Christians towards Jews a few years later, as we see for instance in the allusions to them in the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, *circa* A.D. 157, where the tone adopted towards the Jews has become decidedly hostile. The Church and the Synagogue evidently had not finally parted company when the "Apology of Aristides" was put out.

We possess another writing which also may be classed among what are termed "Apologetics," the well known and beautiful "Letter to Diognetus." The author is unknown. It is evidently somewhat later than the "Apology of Aristides"; some critics, indeed, have suggested that it was a treatise supplementary to it. It is best placed between that writing and the first "Apology" of Justin Martyr, its concluding fragment being later than the earlier part. This would date it roughly some time before the middle of the second century.

The "Letter to Diognetus" also gives us a few most interesting and graphic pictures of the life led by these Christians of the second century. The writer tells us how

they conformed to the customs of the country in which they lived in matters of clothing, and of eating and drinking, and while in possession, many of them, of the rights of citizens, were yet universally treated as strangers. They avoided all excesses, they lived on earth while their hearts were all the time in heaven. They submitted to human laws and ordinances, observing them with the greatest care; loving all men, though persecuted by all, and condemned by those who knew nothing about them and their lives; they were evil-spoken of, put to death—but death meant to them eternal life; they were hated by the Jews, persecuted by the Greeks, and yet in spite of all they kept advancing and multiplying day by day. The common mode of punishment to which they were subjected, says the writer of the letter, was exposure to wild beasts or condemnation to the flames. The epistle to Diognetus was evidently the work of a scholar.

SECTION V.—THE PERSECUTION IN THE LAST YEARS OF HADRIAN.

We have already alluded to the change in the feelings of Hadrian towards the Christians in the latter part of his reign. This change was probably occasioned by his bitter resentment at the great Jewish rebellion. It was long before the Roman was able to distinguish accurately between the Jew and the Christian. The irreconcilable hatred of the Jews for the Christians eventually no doubt effected this. In Jerusalem, Hadrian's dislike of the Christians was especially marked by his desecration of all those places venerated by all Christians alike. He filled up the depression in the little valley which separates Golgotha from the Holy Sepulchre, thus destroying the ancient landmarks and altering beyond recognition the old aspect of the venerated spot. The cave of the Nativity was transformed into a grotto sacred to Adonis, while a consecrated wood and a temple of Adonis covered the holy site of Bethlehem. On a portion of the vast enclosure of the Holy House of Zion, once "the joy of the whole earth," arose a lordly temple dedicated to

Jupiter of the Capitol. The Roman Emperor, in these sad latter years of his brilliant life, seems to have taken a special interest in dishonouring and destroying the most sacred and revered sanctuaries of that devoted and quiet sect to whose earnest pleadings in his earlier and noble years he had listened with seeming interest, and whose votaries he had even protected under the mantle of his Imperial power.

Finally at Rome, and under the very shadow of that enormous and fantastic palace-villa* at Tibur, then almost a suburb of the Imperial city—to the erection of which Hadrian the Emperor, sick alike in mind as in body, devoted the boundless resources of the Empire—began that bitter, cruel persecution of the Christians which darkened his closing days.

Tradition, not very copious as far as regards these earlier years of the second century, has preserved for us a fairly long list of Confessors of the Faith who suffered martyrdom under Hadrian. The great majority of these of course belong to the period covered by his closing years. The most distinguished of them was S. Telesphorus, Bishop of Rome, whose "glorious" martyrdom was mentioned especially by Irenæus (*Adv. Haer.*, iii. 3).

But the story of another episode of Christian suffering for the "Name," which must be dated *circa* A.D. 136-7, certainly not long before Hadrian's death, has obtained a far wider notoriety than that of the martyr Bishop of Rome.

The "Acts" of S. Symphorosa † in this once widely read and comparatively popular class of literature were well known and highly esteemed. Modern criticism dealing

* "L'immense et ridicule villa qui semble le rêve d'un petit bourgeois réalisé avec les ressources d'un tout puissant Empereur . . . ce colossal assemblage de bâtiments de tous les pays et de tous les styles—avec son Lycée, son Académie, son Prytanée, sa vallée de Tempé, son Portique du Poecilé, son Canal de Canopé, son Théâtre grec, son Théâtre latin, jusqu'a son Elysée et son Enfer—dont la masse capricieuse couvrait une surface de sept milles romains."—Allard: *Hist. des Persécutions*, i., v. 4.

† Ruinart, *Acta Sincera*, thus speaks of the "Acts of S. Symphorosa": "De eorum sinceritate nullus videtur dubitandi locus." He gives the yet earlier date of A.D. 120 for the martyrdom; the later date, however, given above is no doubt the accurate one.

especially with internal evidence has branded the recital with grave doubts respecting its genuineness; but the more conservative spirit which has lately prevailed, by subjecting the "Acts" to a searching critical examination, has largely disposed of these objections, and has shown effectually that none of the circumstances connected with the charge made against S. Symphorosa and her seven sons, or with the trials that ensued, or with the martyrdoms which closed this stern, sad episode, are any of them improbable, or in any way liable to the imputation of being unhistorical; while the discoveries resulting from recent researches conducted by scientific antiquarians have gone very far to establish the substantial truth of the "Acts" in question. The story is as follows, and supplies a good illustration of the manner in which the Imperial rescripts were put in action, with fatal results in the case of the accused Christians.

The jealous and hostile priests and officials of the Tibur temples appear to have brought before the sick and superstitious Emperor an oracular message complaining of the vexation caused to the Roman gods by the daily prayers of Symphorosa and her sons to the God of the Christians. Symphorosa belonged to a respected Roman family which had already made itself notorious by its devoted attachment to the proscribed religion, and had in past years, in the persons of two distinguished officers of the Roman army, contributed its quota to the increasing ranks of the martyr army.

Hadrian himself conducted the judicial inquiry, and commanded Symphorosa, the widow of one of the soldier-martyrs in question, to sacrifice to the all-powerful national gods on pain of being sacrificed herself, with her sons. The "Acts" relate that, undismayed by threats, and proof even against torture, the Roman lady remained steadfast, and was eventually thrown into the river Anio with a stone fastened round her neck. On the following day her seven sons were severally interrogated, and on their persistent refusal to sacrifice to the heathen deities, were put to death in various ways, and were interred together in a deep dug pit.

These seven martyrs have always been known as the "septem biothanati."

The redactor or reviser of the present version of these "Acts of Martyrdom" which we now possess, has apparently added little, if anything, to the original recital. No eloquent or elaborate discourse by way of defence is put into the mouths of the victims, no circumstances of miraculous approval or interposition are superadded to the simple true story. Very little indeed of the marvellous appears. We are accurately told in the "Acts" that the place where the bodies of the seven brothers were laid was henceforth called "*Ad Septem Biothanatos*" (the place of the seven who perished by a violent death). As time went on, the original Greek name by which the spot was known in the days of Hadrian, when Greek was the "fashionable" language of the Empire, became the abbreviated Latin appellation, "*Ad Septem Fratres*," and by this name the spot was even called all through the Middle Ages.

And in our own day and time the spot has been identified with striking proof. Some nine miles from Rome, on the Via Tiburtina, the remains * of a basilica built on to a much smaller pile have been unearthed, a kind of chapel with three apses, a very ancient form. The deep grave alluded to in the "Acts" could clearly be traced. The little triple apsidal chapel, or more probably the yet earlier and humbler building alluded to in the "Acts," was raised, as was the custom, over the martyrs' grave. Then, as time went on, probably early in the fourth century, the little "memoria" or chapel became too small for the ever increasing number of visitors and pilgrims to the sacred resting-place of the children of Symphorosa; and the large basilica was built, as was so often the custom, adjoining the primitive "memoria." † The crowd of pilgrim worshippers

* Already in the seventeenth century, Bosio, that great pioneer of catacomb explorations, had noticed the remains of a ruined church on the spot which the people of the district still called "*a sette fratte.*" *Cf.* Bosio, *Roma Sotteranea*, pp. 105–109.

† This was the almost invariable ancient Christian custom. The original tomb of the saint or martyr was ever left undisturbed, and the little "memoria" or chapel originally built over the tomb remained untouched, while to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims who visited the sacred spot, adjoining the chapel a larger chapel or church was built.

assembled in the larger basilica could thus see and venerate the tomb in the little building joined on to it.

The memory of this early martyrdom has thus been kept alive for more than seventeen and a half centuries, and these late discoveries have set their seal upon the substantial truth of the story contained in the "Acts." "He would be a rash man," says a modern scholar of high reputation, "who would venture to tear now from the history of Hadrian's reign the blood-stained page on which this sad record of early Christian life is told."

CHAPTER VII.

THE REVIVAL OF PAGANISM.

SECTION I.—THE ROMAN RELIGION.

A VERY important question arises in the story of the early struggles between Christianity and Paganism which presses for an answer. The religion of Jesus very soon, we have seen, made a firm lodgment *outside* the numerous class of freedmen, petty traders, and slaves. In the first century we find already persons connected with the Imperial court converts to Christianity, which had even made its way among members of the Imperial family. Early in the second century men of high culture, such as Aristides, and later in the same century Justin, Minucius Felix, Melito of Sardis, and many others wrote elaborate treatises in defence of the new faith. In Rome, in Ephesus, in Smyrna, in Athens, and in countless other important centres, the Christians evidently formed at an early date no inconsiderable portion of the population. At the end of the second century the Christian people were so numerous that Tertullian of Carthage wrote, somewhat rhetorically perhaps, as follows: "If we Christians were to separate ourselves from you, you would be affrighted at your solitude, you would be alarmed at the silence which would, in a way, resemble the paralysis of a dead world." How, then, came it to pass that Paganism, as it is commonly understood, was enabled to hold its own and even to make head against the steady progress of such a religion as Christianity*—Paganism with its silly and monstrous fables,

* It seems clear that Christianity, *at first*, was generally received, in those circles where its preaching and teaching penetrated, with considerable favour. The growth of the hostile feeling among the people was somewhat later, and was due to various social causes, injury to certain trades, domestic separations, and the like; these adverse feelings being fostered by interested persons.

with its immoral Deities; fables which the learned and cultured of the first quarter of the first century utterly disbelieved, Deities that at the same period were openly derided by a large majority of all classes and orders of the civilised Roman world?

And yet it did. The serious opposition of Paganism revived and increased steadily as the years of the Empire rolled on. Something must have happened to account for the striking change in the position which Paganism had come to occupy in the minds and hearts of men at the end of the second century; a change which took place, roughly, between the beginning of the first century and the last years of the second, in other words, in the period which lay between the accession of Augustus* and the death of Commodus, the son and successor of the good and great Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

In this chapter an answer to the question will be attempted, and the reasons for the changed position of Paganism briefly discussed.

The Pagan religion of Rome, reawakened from what seemed the torpor of a rapidly advancing death, was inextricably mixed up with the Imperial Government; and the highest positions in religion were filled by the occupants of the powerful civil posts. The strange deification of the Emperors, of which we shall speak presently, made the profession of Christianity, which abhorred all idol-worship, treason against the State.

The reawakened ancient cult† appealed to all classes, cultured and ignorant alike. It was seriously supported by the whole weight of Imperial authority, and by the powerful aid of men of letters, including historians, poets, and philosophers.

* The full name of the great Emperor after his adoption in 44 B.C. by Julius Cæsar was Caius Julius Cæsar Octavianus. We have in the present study used the title *Augustus*, which he assumed and by which he is commonly known, when we speak of him. "Augustus" was a name no one had borne before.

† Professor Ramsay suggests that Christianity as early as the time of Hadrian was a factor in the laboured Renaissance of Paganism. "Paganism even under Hadrian began to feel, under the stimulus of the opposition of Christianity, the pulse of returning life."

It appealed, with its revival of the ancient traditions and ritual, to the Roman patriot who looked back with regret to the far period when men lived their comparatively simple, even austere, work-a-day lives; the men who were the real makers of Rome. It appealed with its mysteries, its oracles, its dreams, to the superstitious—a very large class in the Rome of the Empire, often including the Emperor himself. By its readiness to associate with the gods of old Rome other and strange national deities, it appealed to the Asiatics, the Africans, and the provincials of Gaul alike. Rome and Ephesus, Carthage and Alexandria, Edessa in the far East, Lyons in the far West, were all equally interested in the Pagan system of religion as it was understood and practised at the end of the second century after Christ. We must therefore bear in mind that when Christianity, in the middle of the second century, was confronted with Paganism in the form adopted by the Roman Empire under the Antonines, it was confronted with an adversary by no means discredited or generally disbelieved.

In the period of the Antonines, Pius and Marcus, A.D. 138–80, the religion of Jesus was no longer confined to an obscure and comparatively small sect. From A.D. 64 onwards, it had been neither unknown to the Government nor set aside as of no importance. The action of Nero when he fixed upon the Christians as the object of his terrible persecution, the behaviour of Vespasian, the correspondence of Pliny and Trajan, the successive rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian regulating the action of the Governors in the case of accused Christians, the persecution in the later days of Hadrian, all serve to remind us that the Roman Government between A.D. 64 and A.D. 161, the date of the accession of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, was well aware that there existed in Rome and in most of the provinces of the Empire a strange and earnest community who chose to live outside the pale of the religion of Rome. This society, owing to its peculiar tenets, which in a way separated its members from the ordinary citizens and subjects of Rome, was evidently a source of grave anxiety to the Emperor and his lieutenants.

In the middle of the second century the Christians, ever increasing in number, became so numerous and conspicuous a body that the Government was forced to consider them a distinct power in the Empire, absolutely opposed to the State religion, which was closely bound up with well-nigh all the offices and official dignities of the Empire, and was apparently firmly believed in by the Emperor and more or less by the leading men of Rome.

This Paganism—the religion of Rome as professed in the days of Marcus Aurelius—was not that seemingly childish and discredited cult of which Cicero speaks in the last days of the Republic. A great change had passed over Rome in the period which had elapsed since Cicero wrote. We will, therefore, briefly review what had happened during this period, roughly comprehending a century and three-quarters, in the Pagan religious world.

In Cicero's letters there is, comparatively speaking, little mention of religion. It is true that some of the sacerdotal functions were still attached to, and were performed by holders of, certain offices of the State. But these office-holders were generally sceptics, and absolutely indifferent to the ancient worship, in which they continued to perform a leading official part. Great men became augurs and pontiffs at the same time that they were prætors or consuls. But the religious functions which they had to discharge were to them of comparatively little interest. Cicero in his writings admirably represents the spirit of his age and time. In some of his works—speaking as a statesman—he appears as though he believed in the reality of the cult in which he shared. In others, as, for instance, in his treatise on the "Nature of the Gods," he speaks with undisguised contempt of the deities of Rome. But in his letters, of which we have so ample a collection, we see what was in the heart of the great orator and statesman. In his moments of sorrow and sadness, when he mourned the loss of a dear daughter, or grieved over his country's fortunes, never a whisper of eternal life, never a word of trust in those Beings he professed to believe in, appears to lighten the sombre narrative. And when the

end was in sight, all he could say was, "If we are among the happy ones, we ought to despise death; if among the sad ones, we ought to look forward to it." The blessed hopes of immortality which here and there illumine his writings seem to have brought him no solid comfort in his dark hour. His expressions of respect for the gods of Rome were evidently written for the public eye; they could scarcely have been the outcome of his own convictions.

And Cicero's contemporaries were like him; we find among the best and noblest the same contradictory statements, outward professions of belief, inward utter indifference.

When we take up the letters of the Emperor Marcus to his friend and master, Fronto, the thought of the gods and the hope of the gods meet us in every page. The Sovereign and his friend can hardly suggest a project without adding: "If the gods please." When Fronto, for instance, hears that Verus, the Emperor's adopted brother, has recovered from a serious sickness, he writes the following, evidently speaking from his heart: "At the good news I went at once to the chapel and knelt at every altar. . . I was in the country at the time, and I used to go and pray at the foot of every tree sacred to the gods."

Sentences like these occur and recur in his writings: "Every morning I pray for Faustina." Anxiety for the wife of Marcus, the result of the sickness of the dear one, wells up in such words as "We must trust her with the gods."

In the time of Cicero, the philosopher was well-nigh always a sceptic. In the middle of the second century, the philosopher or man of culture as a rule was apparently a firm believer in the gods of Rome; not a few of them were superstitious in their beliefs. For instance, we find the philosopher Emperor Marcus in his "Meditations" gratefully thanking the gods for having suggested in dreams remedies for his malady.

What now had brought about this changed state of things? What had happened, since the day when Julius Cæsar had assumed sovereign power in the old Republic, so completely to change the state of religious belief in

Rome? For contemptuous unbelief had evidently given place to a real, even a superstitious devotion in the case of many, to the gods of the old worship.

To answer this question we must rapidly glance over the past story of the old belief. Religion during the earlier times of the Kings and of the Republic had had great weight among men, and really influenced the customs of Italy and Rome. It was a creed which adored all forces of Nature; fear of these deities rather than love characterised the old Italian devotion. Tullus Hostilius, for instance, erected a temple dedicated to "Fear." The Roman peasant, deeply superstitious, as he came to his little hut after his day's toil, dreaded lest he should meet some faun or other supernatural being in the gloaming. It was a simple ritual which was practised in early times, and the gods were long represented by symbols rather than by images; Varro speaks regretfully of the days when there were no temples and no images in Rome, when the gods were adored under symbols, such as a lance planted firmly in the earth or a stone anointed with oil, or a noble tree in the forest. But this primitive devotion was something real, and it powerfully influenced the people. Very early were religious functions associated with the State official positions, and, as we have mentioned, when a Roman became prætor or consul at the same time he became augur or pontiff. This union of sacred and political offices always continued a characteristic feature of Roman government under the Empire.

For a long time these high dignities were the especial prerogative of the ruling patrician class. In them the plebeian had no share.

The time came when a change passed over the old simple religion of Rome. It may be dated from the period of the conquest of Greece, and Greece soon avenged herself on her conquerors by largely superseding the ancient Roman ways with Greek culture, habits, thought, literature. Greek thinkers seem, however, to have been much struck and impressed with the spirit of order, purity, and morality in Roman private life; of obedience, discipline, and patriotism in Roman

public life. The Romans attributed the spirit which the Greeks wondered at and admired, in great part to their religion, to their *fear* of the gods. Great Roman writers and thinkers like Cicero, even after the old belief had become worn out, repeat this, and tell us that the Romans surpassed other people in their devotion to the gods, that Rome vanquished the world owing to her earnest religious belief, that when Greece first came into close contact with Rome, Rome was the most religious city of the world, and that to her deep and simple piety she owed her greatness and her conquests.

It was largely owing to the revival of this ancient spirit of devotion and piety, a revival that commenced in the days of Augustus, reaching perhaps its highest development in the days of Marcus Aurelius, that the Paganism of the Empire was enabled for some two centuries and a half to carry on its war with that Christianity to which in the end it succumbed.

Greece in due course avenged herself for her conquest in various ways; among others, she corrupted the old simplicity of the religion of the conquering people, while teaching them her own fables, some beautiful, some monstrous and childish. There were very few of these legends or fables treating of the gods current in Rome before Greek culture was introduced; and for a time these new fables struck the older, simpler cult a fatal blow.

Other causes, too, were at work which served to sap and to impair the power of the ancient Roman belief. Strangely enough, this old religion had been specially the religion of the privileged class—the patricians. To these alone, as we have said, belonged for a lengthened period the exclusive right of filling the various offices connected with the priesthood; and in very early days the plebeians were even excluded from sharing at all in the public religious rites. Gradually the influence and power of the plebeians of Rome increased, religious equality quickly followed civil equality, and when the priestly offices were no longer confined to the best and noblest in Rome, a marked deterioration was soon

visible among the pontiffs and augurs. The old ceremonies were altered, even neglected. As time went on, the Greek influence above referred to became more and more marked. The Greek drama, when introduced among the Romans, contributed largely to weaken the power of the old religion among all classes and orders of the people. We find Plautus, perhaps the oldest of the Roman-Greek school of playwrights, openly parodying the most venerable formularies of the ancient faith. Ennius still more openly mocked at the gods and their votaries. To Ennius Rome owes a popular translation of the sacred history of Euhemerus, the object of whose work was to demonstrate that all the gods in the first instance had been heroic men, kings or warriors, who had been exalted after their death by their grateful and admiring contemporaries and descendants into the position of deities.

All these and other more subtle causes had well-nigh destroyed the old reverence for and belief in the objects of the primitive Roman worship, and so it came to pass that, in the last days of the Republic, Cicero, who so well voices the opinions of his day and time, often writes almost as a sceptic in all matters of religion. The cold respect and formal reverence which such men as he still inculcated for the ancient beliefs and rites, belonged rather to State policy, to what they believed was necessary to the well-being of the Republic, than, as we have pointed out above, to any deep feeling of real conviction.

When the Republic gave place to the Empire, it is not too much to say that in Rome religion was fast dying out. Many of the temples of the most august among the gods were even falling into ruin. The sacred possessions attached to them were being rapidly alienated. The hallowed woods and groves were often confiscated by individuals for private purposes; not a few of the ancient festivals were neglected; the chief sacerdotal dignities were frequently unclaimed; and Varro did not hesitate to affirm that the religion of Rome was even perishing, not owing to the attacks of its foes, but because of the neglect of its votaries.

SECTION II.—THE AUGUSTAN AWAKENING.

THE grave danger to the well-being of Rome which would surely result from the absence of all religious belief among the people, was perceived by several of the leading men in the period of transition which immediately followed the downfall of the Republic; but it was the genius of Octavianus Cæsar (Augustus) which recognised the imperative necessity of religion as the foundation storey of any permanent Government. The very name by which this greatest of the Emperors is known in history, and which he transmitted to a long line of Imperial successors as their proudest title—"Augustus"—was a term borrowed from the ancient Roman ritual language, where it is used as the designation of a temple consecrated with solemn rites. In assuming this semi-sacred title, he, as it were, anticipated the apotheosis which awaited him after death—and claimed, too, that while on earth the supreme master of the Roman world was the representative of the immortal gods. In the course of his reign the occupant of the office of Pontifex Maximus died. Augustus at once took upon himself the office, which carried with it the headship of religion in Rome. It was said with justice that the house where this great restorer of the ancient cult dwelt on the Palatine during his long, momentous reign, in some respects resembled a temple in its form and special adornment. It is no mere quaint fancy which traces to the work and claim of Augustus the semi-divine halo which has ever crowned the sacred heads of a long line of Christian Emperors and Kings, who more or less, in different lands, have succeeded to his power and position. They, like him, though many with a different and better title, claim to reign in some measure as the vice-gerent of God on earth.

But it was not merely by the assumption of titles and dignities or by the peculiar adornments of his palace that Augustus played the part of a religious restorer and reformer. He found, when he became Emperor, most of the ancient temples falling into ruin and decay. In the restoration of

the old shrines and in the erection and sumptuous adornment of new temples he spent vast sums, and persuaded the representatives of the great houses to follow his example in this generosity. And thus, as the years of his prosperous reign rolled on, the old worship was gradually restored to far more than its ancient splendour. He neglected nothing which might throw lustre upon the restored religious rites. On the priests and vestals he conferred many privileges and an exalted rank, requiring from senators and other distinguished persons the same minute attention to all points of ritual observance which he was ever careful to show himself. It is indisputable that the work of Augustus in a marvellous way infused new life into a religion which in the last period of the Republic seemed to be a dying and worn-out cult; nor did he, in his care for the shattered fanes and broken altars and neglected rites of the discredited gods of Rome, forget to legislate for the improvement of the moral life of his city and Empire. Augustus, as we have said, felt that the basis of all stable government must be laid upon the sound foundation of religion, and upon laws which aim at morality and purity. The great Emperor was emphatically a great legislator as well as a restorer of the ancient religion.

A singularly brilliant group of writers adorned the court of Augustus. The historian, the poet, and the philosopher, each was represented; and the works produced under the shadow of the Emperor are among the most famous of the writings of antiquity. Livy, Propertius, Horace, Ovid, Virgil, to take the most conspicuous examples, are names which apparently will never die while the world endures.

Historians and poets all struck more or less the same note, the note their Imperial master loved: the glorification of the old simple Roman life, and the old simple Roman faith in the gods. It was to these that the present surpassing grandeur of Rome was owing. The burden of the song of the brilliant writers of the court of Augustus was "O that the present generation of Romans who have entered into the fruit of their ancestors' toils, would follow them in their life, and imitate them in their worship!"

AUGUSTUS.

Once owned by Edmund Burke, now in the British Museum.

In the case of two of these, not, perhaps, the very greatest of that illustrious group, Ovid and Horace, we have some doubt as to their sincerity in really desiring the reforms which they advocated; undoubtedly their writings are more severe than were their lives, and even in these writings a terrible picture of the society in which they lived, and in the extravagance of which they shared and evidently delighted, is painted by them. The one—Ovid—gives us sketches of the life of the immortals; but his evil pictures of the life led by the dwellers on Olympus are evidently based on his too faithful memories of the life led by his contemporaries and associates at Rome. The other—Horace—without the thin veil with which Ovid has covered his sketches, openly draws pictures of Roman life, Roman aims and hopes; and they are too often degrading, at times aimless, even hopeless. Their advice, it must be confessed, has ever an insincere ring, and their words were evidently not sufficient seriously to influence society for good. Indeed, had we only the writings of the popular poets, Ovid and Horace, we should scarcely hesitate in coming to the conclusion that the attempts of Augustus at reformation in morals, and his efforts to restore the ancient worship, were barren of definite results.

But there was a yet greater writer standing at Augustus' right hand, who leaves a very different impression on the student. No one, statesman or poet, helped the noble project of Augustus like Virgil; if others, more or less courtier-like, took their cue from that all-powerful Emperor, and coloured their works with aims and aspirations borrowed from him, Virgil was at least in earnest. With his whole heart and soul he longed to see the people return to the old religion; he believed with an intense belief that the grandeur of his country was based upon the simple, pure life led by the early makers of the Roman power.

In the "Georgics"—the great epic of rural life—we meet with expressions which evidently came from the heart of the great poet. He paints as none before him had painted, perhaps none will ever paint again, how the strength of a land

lay in its peasants, how the old rural life of Italy produced that race of hardy soldiers which had made Rome the mistress of the world. The country life had ever strengthened the real religious feeling which was the true foundation of Roman greatness. It was no soft, dreamy existence in which the Roman conquerors were nurtured, but a hard, laborious life, and in this the gods had ordered that men should live. But the stern life of rural toil was sweetened and ennobled by prayer. "Work and pray" was the conclusion of the great poem: "above all things worship the gods" was the solemn charge of the "Georgics," "in primis venerare Deos." It was a sad day for Rome when the city life with the artificial pleasures of the theatre and circus was substituted for the pure, healthy joys of the woods and the fields. The city life produced an enfeebled and debauched race of lazy, useless men, who believed in nothing. The old rural life, on the other hand, was the mother of a hardy race of men who were ready to fight and die for their country, who feared the gods and believed in the rewards and punishments of the immortals. These men were the makers of Rome.

But it was in the "Æneid" that Virgil especially helped Augustus in his effort to bring men back to the old faith. The famous epic is before all things a religious poem. The "Æneid" was for the Italians of the first years of the Empire what the religious epic of Dante was for the men who lived thirteen or fourteen hundred years later.

Even more than the "Georgics" the "Æneid" led men to love and to reverence the old simple manners and customs, with their all-pervading religious colouring, which Augustus so longed to reintroduce into the artificial and evil society of his time. Never was a more enchanting picture drawn than Virgil's sketch of the old King Evander, living his homely life, with his brave, simple, manly ideas.

We must not linger unduly over the great poem which so powerfully aided the Emperor in his plans to make his Empire better, purer, more religious; one page, however, must be given to the special religious colouring of the great

patriotic epic. While the Roman poet largely bases his theology upon the scenery and legendary notices of the Homeric poem, the gods of Homer are presented in the Roman poem under very different aspects. Virgil gives us a somewhat more reverent idea of the divinities whose worship he would fain restore. They interfere less openly in human affairs, they dwell in a more mysterious atmosphere. They pity rather than share in mortal passions. The Roman poet shrank from attributing to the gods anger, passion, jealousy, and the like. The childish and frivolous, coarse and fleshly, legends which Ovid, for instance, delights in re-telling in his own winning and attractive manner, never appear in Virgil's great epic. The estimate of divinity which Virgil pressed upon his readers was a lofty one. The gods were the supreme refuge, for instance, of the unhappy, the sad-hearted, the oppressed. His hero, a child of the gods, so resigned, so distrustful of himself, so ready for sacrifice of self, so submissive to the will of heaven, is almost in character a Christian hero. Indeed, in all the Christian ages, Virgil has been admired by not a few saintly followers of Jesus of Nazareth, almost as a pioneer of the nobler and purer faith. Dante well compares him to one walking in the dark night and carrying, but holding all the while behind him, a burning torch, which served as a light, not for himself but for those who followed in his wake.*

* As early as A.D. 325 Constantine quoted at considerable length Virgil's "Fourth Eclogue" as a very early testimony to the divinity of Christ. From that period, all through the Middle Ages, the great Latin poet was regarded in the Christian Church as a seer and a preacher, though perhaps unconsciously, of Christ. It was even the habit in some countries, in the dramatic representations which were customary in the ritual of the Christian festival in the naves of great churches, to introduce the more prominent prophets of the Old Testament, who recited before the congregation their most famous prophetic testimonies to the coming Messiah; among whom, after Moses, David, Isaiah, Micah, and others of the prophets had been introduced, Virgil came forward, and was invited as "Prophet of the Gentiles" to rehearse his witness to the Christ in the language of the well-known "Eclogue." A famous mediæval legend relates how S. Paul, passing by Naples in the course of his travels, visited the tomb of Virgil, and weeping over the grave, thus addressed the dead: "What would I not have made

Virgil may be taken as a typical Roman of the more serious class, who, from patriotic reasons, if not on deeper and more earnest grounds, looked with regret on the past, with its more austere life, and its belief in the rule of the gods; who gladly welcomed the measures which Augustus took to bring about a new state of things in Rome, especially in its moral and religious life. The Emperor had no ally in his patriotic work so influential as the universally admired poet.

The vivid representation of the life of the soul after death, with its living pictures of the rewards provided for the good, and of the punishment reserved for the evil, contained in the Sixth Book of the "Æneid," read and re-read as it was by all sorts and conditions of men, strangely affected Roman society, and directed men's thoughts to the ever pressing questions connected with the hereafter.

In his lifetime Virgil had absolutely no rival. All serious persons, even if they differed from his conclusions, welcomed and read his verses. They were used almost at once as a text-book in the schools. So great was his popularity that it is even related how on one occasion, when he was noticed entering the theatre, the vast assemblage rose as one man and greeted him as it was the habit to greet Augustus himself. And his popularity was enduring. The influence of such poems so widely and generally read and studied as were the "Georgics" and the "Æneid" must have been enormous, and contributed not a little to the restoration of the ancient faith.

One sorrowful fact, however, must be noticed in this, our brief sketch of the re-awakening of the worship of the old gods of Rome. In spite of Augustus' patriotic zeal for the reformation of morality, in the face of the admirable laws which were put out to this end in his reign, with all his

of thee, O thou greatest of the poets, had I only found thee alive." The old rhythm of the traditionary hymn or poem runs thus:

"Ad Maronis mausoleum
Ductus, fudit super eum
Pia rorem lacrymæ.
'Quem te,' inquit, 'redidissem
Si te vivum invenissem
Poetarum Maxime!'"

Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome.

THE FORUM.

View from the Terrace below the Capitol.

apparently real love for the more austere and purer life of the primitive Roman people, it was an open secret that the private life of the great Emperor was terribly stained with grave moral irregularities; and later in his reign his own sin seems to have brought its punishment, when the disorders discovered in the Imperial family in the persons of his daughter and granddaughter were punished with exile, and even in the case of some of the guilty accomplices with death. And among his own immediate ministers, friends, and courtiers, there were many Sybarites in their way of living; many whose admiration of the old simple chaste life was confined to their words and expressions, but found little place in their daily life.

There is no doubt how sadly these things, too well known in the city and Empire, militated against the complete success of the re-awakening of religion, of the reformation of morals in Rome and the provinces. But when due allowance for all these hindrances and drawbacks has been made, there is no doubt that the wishes of Augustus, so magnificently voiced by Virgil, especially in the question of the revival of religion, were in a large measure crowned with success; and before the long and brilliant reign of the first great Emperor was closed, the religion of Rome, partly based on primitive Italian traditions, partly upon the Homeric presentation of Greek religion, with certain modifications suggested by later philosophic thought, had become once more a power in the Empire. The great gods, such as the Jupiter of the Capitol, the Venus Genetrix, the Mars Ultor, the Apollo of the Palatine, whose splendid temples, rebuilt or restored, dominated the great city with their lordly magnificence, were no longer the objects of contempt and derision as in the latter years of the Republic; the rites performed in their shrines by the numerous priests and attendants were once more shared in by the people of all ranks and orders, from the senator to the slave; some following the gorgeous and striking ritual because it was the fashion of the day, set by the Emperor and his court, others without doubt sharing in the restored and revived worship with feelings of genuine devotion and unfeigned adoration.

After the death of the Emperor Augustus, the restorer of

Paganism, the period covered by the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, with its unbridled tyranny, its cruelties, its reckless confiscations, its contempt for life on the part of the rulers of the Roman world, was on the whole favourable to the development of the newly-awakened faith in the gods; especially favourable to a deepened belief in the future life, in rewards and punishments after the fret and fever of this present existence were passed. For men are ever ready to turn to religion in times of stress and danger and sorrow. So the trend of events in those bloodstained reigns, when human life was held so cheap, tended to draw Roman society in the direction pointed out by the reforms of Augustus. Strangely enough, though from very different motives, the evil Emperors who immediately followed Augustus were solicitous for the prosperity of religion. Tiberius was learned in ancient customs, and watched over the old Pagan ritual and those who were in charge of the elaborate Pagan rites, conferring upon them additional rights and privileges. Claudius was superstitiously devout; Nero, who mocked at the work of Augustus and made light of the gods, in his way, too, was superstitious, and was in the habit of anxiously consulting the auspices. The nobler successors of Augustus were all of them anxious for the preservation of the ancient religion, believing that the prosperity of the Empire was closely linked with the maintenance of the worship of the gods whom their fathers, who laid the foundation of the world-Empire, served so zealously.

SECTION III.—THE DEIFICATION OF THE EMPERORS.

One singular development of Paganism requires, at least, a brief study. Again and again, when in Rome or in the provinces a persecution of the Christians in "the 250 years" was formally decreed, or was suddenly excited by popular clamour, the accused Christian was frequently, perhaps in the majority of cases, publicly brought in front of the statue of the deified Emperor and challenged, if he valued his life,

to offer incense, and then to perform an act of adoration to the Imperial personage portrayed by the image before him. Again and again the Christian firmly refused, with the invariable result that the life of the bold protester against this form of idolatry was forfeited. "I do not call the Emperor a god," wrote Tertullian in his famous "Apology" (33–4), thus powerfully voicing the Christian shudder at this extraordinary development of idol worship; "I cannot lie . . . I have but one Master, who is, too, the Emperor's Master. Him must we adore, if we wish Him to bless Cæsar. Do not call him God who can do nothing without God's help."

The genesis of this curious cult, which became eventually so prominent a feature in the government of Imperial Rome, was as follows. Among the nations of antiquity it was a common practice for the various cities to pay divine honours to their supposed founders. This local hero was ever a favourite object of adoration among the people, and even the more cultured citizens joined in the popular worship for various obvious reasons. In the East, the people went a step further, and paid divine honours to all their sovereigns without distinction, without reference to their deserts as founders, legislators, benefactors, or conquerors. So in Egypt Pharaoh was ever regarded as divine, and later in the same country the Ptolemies were careful to maintain their title to their divine rank among men. Greece in its later period, when its ancient liberty was gone, servilely imitated the East, and was content to adore its various masters, unworthy tyrants though they too often were. In Italy it was different; it is true that in some way the Italians chose to regard as deities the old mythic kings of Latium, such as Picus, Faunus, Latinus; but of the ancient kings of Rome, only Romulus appears to have received divine honours. We never hear even of the revered Numa or of any of his royal successors being regarded as gods in Rome. Yet even in Rome and Italy the way for the later Emperor-worship was prepared by the general custom in family life which chose to regard "the departed" in the light of powerful spirits (Dii Manes),

spirits who were accessible to the prayers of dear ones they had left on earth, and to whom they were enabled under certain conditions still to afford assistance and protection. Thus the father, or head of the household, after death, often received worship from the members of his family. The "Lares," according to popular opinion, were the souls of ancestors, and these "Lares" were very commonly the object of family worship in Rome.

The Stoic philosophy which often accommodated itself to popular views, endeavoured to modify this belief by teaching that it was only the souls of the good and great who were thus privileged from their home in the other world to protect and assist their kinsfolk.

But the first formally deified Prince in Rome was Julius Cæsar. No great hero perhaps ever captured popular opinion as did the mighty conqueror who had won for his native city and country such world-wide fame and power; and who, through his marvellous series of campaigns, had made Rome the capital of an Empire hitherto undreamed of. Julius Cæsar was something more than the greatest of conquerors. As a ruler he was passionately loved as well as greatly admired in Rome and Italy. We have already noticed the real and intense devotion he had acquired among the Jews, that strangest of foreign colonies in the capital city. The pathetic circumstances of his tragic death served to fan the flame of love and devotion with which that great master of the Roman world was regarded at Rome; and the deification of Julius Cæsar was the result of an incontrollable popular movement. It was not long before the worship of the new god was legally established, and with strange rapidity the cult of the murdered sovereign spread throughout the Roman world, conquerors and conquered alike agreeing to regard Julius Cæsar as a god.

We pass by the efforts of smaller men such as Sextus Pompeius and Antony, who obtained temporary power when Cæsar had passed away, to win for themselves among their contemporaries divine honours similar to those accorded by the popular love to the great Julius; and we pause at the

story of the great ruler best known as the Emperor Augustus.

In the servile eastern provinces, after the successful campaigns which witnessed the ruin of the hopes of his competitors for the Empire, Augustus was quickly selected as a deity; but he only permitted this form of adulation on condition of being associated in the temples dedicated to him with the goddess Roma. A number of such temples soon arose in the principal provinces in honour of "Augustus and Roma," and this example was followed, but more sparingly, in the west. In Italy this Imperial cult was long discouraged; and though before he passed away there were temples in his honour in many of the more important Italian cities, Rome, while Augustus lived, was dishonoured by no example of this strange, impious flattery. After his death the Senate at once, by a formal decree, pronounced that the late Emperor was henceforth to be reckoned among the gods. At his State funeral, a ceremony of imposing splendour in the Campus Martius, care was taken that an eagle should be seen by the crowd soaring from the burning pile, as though bearing the soul of the departed monarch to Olympus—a theatrical confirmation of the Senate's decree which seems, however, to have been usually omitted in the case of the deified successors of the first Augustus.

The apotheosis of the founder of the long and stately line of the Emperors of Rome, although Augustus had to a certain extent outlived the wonderful popularity which he enjoyed in his earlier years, was generally well received. Outwardly at all events in Rome, as in the provinces, unnumbered prayers from all sorts and conditions of men were offered up on the altars of "Divus Augustus," whose life, though sadly stained with private vices, had been beneficial on the whole to the great Empire over which he had so long ruled; but it was, after all, a strange life to hold up to the veneration and adoration of a world!

Some scholars who seek to explain this strange and yet generally popular form of idolatry, which continued to hold its own well-nigh all through the period of the Empire before

the barbarian flood had become something more than a menace—roughly speaking, a period extending over nearly four centuries—tell us how, while Rome hesitated to pay divine honour to the living Emperor, as a rule contenting itself with acknowledging the departed sovereign as God, the provinces had no such scruple, but worshipped the reigning sovereign as well as the deified dead Emperors; and they further explain the provincial cult as an act of grateful loyalty to the Roman Empire under whose mighty shadow they lived in peace and comparative security. The worship of the Emperors in the provinces was in other words the worship of the Roman power in the person of the Emperor, who was the appointed representative of that power.

This worship of the Emperor, then, may be taken as the symbol of the unity of the vast Empire made up of so many nationalities. Every province, every important provincial city, usually possessed its own special deity, as, for instance, Ephesus adored Diana (Artemis); Pergamos worshipped Æsculapius; Cyziqua especially honoured Proserpine. But the priest or flamen of "Augustus and Rome" represented the whole Empire; and thus there was a solidarity of worship extending over Rome and all the outlying provinces. "Flamen Romæ, Divorum et Augusti," was the general title of the priest of the Imperial cult.

The Christian, who naturally refused with indignation to offer incense at this national altar, in a way separated himself from the religion of the Empire; and his refusal was construed by the Imperial magistrate as an act of disloyalty to the supreme Government and to Rome.

It is true that in some cities there were various temples dedicated to several Emperors, who more or less had won or deserved popular recognition; as, for instance, in wealthy commercial Ostia, the port of the capital of the world, which possessed several distinct "Imperial" shrines. But, as a rule, in an ordinary city the majesty of the Emperors collectively was venerated in one common "Imperial" temple.

But the question presses for a more direct answer: Was this worship at a temple of an Emperor of Rome—or at a shrine where, perhaps, many Emperors were adored in a group, some of whom were monsters of cruelty and vice, some of them poor creatures at best, and only a few really great and noble—a genuine expression of the hearts of the worshippers? Or was it merely a piece of hypocrisy, a courtly, flattering falsehood, repeated and repeated again throughout the vast Roman world for nigh upon four centuries? In the latter case the dragging of Christians before such shrines, the scenes of conscious hypocrisy and untruth, the requiring them under pain of death and agony to worship there, to share in these scenes of unreality and pretence, would increase enormously the crime of official Paganism.

A patient study, however, of this strange Imperial cult on the whole purges it of this dark stain of unreality and conscious hypocrisy. It was first of all, undoubtedly in the provinces, a most popular form of idolatry. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, in the last quarter of the second century, for instance, tells us in his "Apology" that the statues of the Cæsars were more venerated than the images of the ancient deities. This is partly accounted for when we remember how "the majesty of Rome" was closely associated with the Emperor, and how in venerating the Cæsar, the genius or the power of Rome was included in the act of adoration; and a feeling of deep gratitude to the power or genius of Rome for the peace and prosperity they enjoyed undoubtedly lived among the majority of the provincials. Their adoration, therefore, at these Imperial shrines does not appear to have been mere hypocrisy. These worshippers were, according to the light they possessed, in most instances probably sincere.

In the case of the army, too, among those legions stationed in so many quarters of the Roman world, the worship of the Cæsar was no doubt a reality. These would not even need the association of "the genius of Rome" to give the cult of the Emperor a reality. As a rule the soldiery, when faithful, were devotedly, passionately attached

to their supreme chief; the wicked Nero, almost to the last, threw his glamour over the legions.

If anywhere, it is in Rome, where most of the thought-leaders of the Empire congregated, that we must seek for doubters and scorners when the question of the reality of the worship of the Emperors presented itself. It was in Rome that these deified ones principally lived. The littlenesses, the ignoble vices, the dark crimes of the magnificent Cæsar, were too well known to the dwellers hard by the sumptuous and stately group of buildings on the Palatine. Could the Roman citizens, living as they did beneath the shadow of the Cæsar's house, acquiesce in the worship of these strange gods?

And yet, curiously enough, there is little outward sign even of Rome's repugnance to this worship. The apotheosis of Augustus appears to have been honestly welcomed as heartily in Rome as it was in the provinces. Even Seneca, philosopher and statesman, who certainly now and again had his doubts as to the righteousness of the Imperial cult, thus writes of the deification of Augustus: "For us to believe that he, Augustus, is a God, no compulsion is necessary." The younger Pliny again addressed Trajan in these words: "You have deified your (adoptive) father (Nerva), not from any feeling of vanity, or to insult heaven, but simply because you believe him a God." These are surely strong words confirmatory of the *bona fides*, the sincerity of Pliny the scholar-statesman, and of Trajan the great and good Emperor.

Occasionally, it is true, public opinion at Rome was revolted at some glaring and monstrous attempt made by some irresponsible Cæsar to deify ridiculous and discreditable personages; as when Nero proclaimed Poppæa a goddess, or Hadrian insisted on the worship of Antinous. But even these insulting promotions of infamous mortals to the rank of the deified, although, no doubt in Rome at least, they weakened the theory of Imperial worship, had no permanent effect on this most popular cult. Indeed, as time went on it grew more general. It was at its height in the days of Marcus Aurelius in the second half of the second century.

It has been suggested, with great ingenuity, that probably while the masses, especially in the provinces, accepted the deified Emperors as genuine gods, and addressed their prayers to them as such, the more enlightened, especially at Rome, regarded them rather in the light of the demi-gods, or as the Heroes of Greek worship; differentiating between the *divus* (divine) prefixed to the name of the deified Cæsar, and the sacred term *Deus* (God); but this difference in signification was certainly not primitive, nor do the above quoted words of such serious writers as Seneca and the younger Pliny at all support the ingenious hypothesis in question.

Following up this hypothesis, to quote a purely Christian usage and to pursue a train of purely Christian ideas, the official senatorial decree of deification was in effect a sort of "canonisation," which in the eyes of the more instructed placed the deified Emperor among the saints in blessedness, neither more nor less. The loftier conception which ranked him as divine and on the same level as the immortal gods, was probably held by the uncultured masses.

But this ingenious suggestion, for it is nothing more, even if it be adopted, cannot be said to fully explain this worship of the deified Emperors; which is and must remain a grave difficulty in any intelligent conception of Paganism. The cult of the Emperors was a worship which was almost universal in the period which lies between the death of Julius Cæsar and the Edict of Constantine.

For there is no shadow of doubt that the Emperor, living or dead, thus formally honoured by a decree of the Senate, became at once in the eyes of the general Roman world a god in the loftiest sense of the word. That some persons were utterly incredulous, and mocked at the pretentious claim of the newly elevated Imperial colleague of the immortals, is more than probable; but as a rule these scornful doubts were veiled, and the whole Roman world may be said to have acquiesced in the worship of each newly deified member of the Imperial line of princes, as the equal of the great gods, the objects of the reverent worship of their forefathers.

SECTION IV.—SACERDOTAL CORPORATIONS.

It was indeed a wonderful renaissance of the old Roman religion, this work of Augustus; what seemed to be dying out sprang up again with new and vigorous life. Augustus was persuaded that the prosperity of Rome was thus linked with the maintenance of the ancient cult, and, as we have seen his policy was adopted and continued by his successors in the Empire, the Emperor Marcus (A.D. 161–80) following out the policy with perhaps greater ardour than any of his predecessors.

Very carefully indeed were the hallowed traditions of the past revived, as belonging to the story of the making of Rome, closely linked in the policy of Augustus and the Emperors with the maintenance and further development of Rome's grandeur and power. Among these hallowed traditions we have not alluded to the ancient *sacerdotal corporations* which had, especially in the latter years of the Republic, in a measure passed out of sight and been suffered to decay. Augustus revived these and re-established them, if possible giving them more than their ancient position and influence; and these powerful religious corporations, then re-established, continued to flourish, some of them, until the time of Constantine, when naturally with the fall of Paganism they sank into decay and oblivion.* Of these brotherhoods we may mention, as instances, the Salii and the Luperci. To be a member of one of these corporations was a privilege highly esteemed under the rule of the Pagan Emperors. The young Marcus Aurelius, for instance, was admitted into the Salian confraternity when he was only eight years old, and subsequently became the president; and prided himself on his accurate knowledge of the ritual which was used when a new member was admitted to the college.

But of these sacerdotal colleges that of the Arval Brothers was the most famous and perhaps the best known. They traced their foundation back to the times of Romulus, the first King

* The probable date of the dissolution of the Arval Brotherhood was, however, earlier, *circa* A.D. 244–49. This is discussed briefly at the close of this section.

of Rome. Romulus, so said the ancient tradition, with the eleven sons of Acca Laurentia, his nurse, had been the first Arval Brothers. They appear to have been united as a college of priests, instituted to pray and sacrifice to the gods who presided over the fruits of the fields; hence their name, from *arva*, the fields. They invoked the blessing of the immortals upon agriculture, in accordance with a very old form of Roman worship. The chief deity invoked was feminine, but nameless, pointing to a period anterior to the introduction of divinities with specific functions. She is invoked simply as "Dea Dia."

During the Republic, whilst always existing as a confraternity, we learn little of these Arval Brothers. They had nothing to do apparently with the State, hence the silence which rests upon them. In the renaissance of religion and of archaic customs under Augustus the Arvals received a large share of Imperial patronage; this was especially owing to the hoar antiquity of their foundation and the mystic reference of their ceremonies and ritual to agriculture and that primitive rural life in which the reforming Emperor took so deep an interest. Under the Empire the confraternity numbered among its members many of the foremost personages in Rome, with the Emperor himself at its head. It was considered a high honour to be one of the ancient corporation, and in a list of titles and dignities proudly displayed by a powerful Roman under the Empire, the fact of being an Arval Brother was never omitted.

Their chief annual festival lasted three days. Careful minutes of their proceedings were kept, and we learn from these that a most elaborate ceremonial was observed, consisting of sacrifice and prayer, processions, and official repasts. A special dress, too, was required, the whole ritual being based on ancient tradition. Late discoveries have localised the site of the sanctuary where these Arval mysteries were performed. It seems to have been some few miles from Rome on the right bank of the Tiber, as it flowed through the Campagna from Rome to Ostia.

In the little book of the Arval rites which was given to each brother was the famous sacred song of the Arvals, which

had come down from remote antiquity, and which they repeated without perhaps understanding its archaic phraseology.*

This fashionable revival of a very ancient guild or confraternity thus introduced into a company or brotherhood, made up during the Empire of the noblest and most illustrious of the Romans, memories and traditional usages handed down from Romulus and the earliest of the Kings of Rome.

The Arval Brotherhood were besides especially bound to loyal duties in connection with the reigning Emperor and his Imperial house. They solemnly "kept" his birthday and the birthdays of his family, celebrating, too, the memories of any victories in which he had been concerned.

Fragments of marble tablets on which the acts of the Arval Brotherhood are inscribed have been discovered, with dates which show its existence from the early days of the Empire down to A.D. 238. Nothing, however, has been found bearing a later date than this—the Emperor Gordian's name being on the last dated fragment.

It would seem as though shortly after the death of Gordian the confraternity ceased to exist. Most probably the favourable disposition of the Emperor Philip, A.D. 244 to A.D. 249, towards Christianity determined him to put an end to the famous Pagan college in which the reigning Emperor occupied so prominent a position.†

SECTION V.—THE ADMISSION OF FOREIGN DEITIES AMONG THE OLD GODS OF ROME.

MINGLED with the old gods of Italy were the gods of the many nations who had been subjected to the authority of Rome. The Roman was ever ready to recognise the points of similarity between the gods of a conquered people and his own ancestral deities. So Julius Cæsar writes of the Gauls: "They especially honour Mercury, and after him Apollo,

* The Song of the Arval Brothers has come down to us, and scholars consider it the oldest specimen existing of the primitive Latin tongue.

† Compare De Rossi's *Bulletino di Archeologia Christiana*, 1869, p. 14, and Allard, *Histoire des Persécutions*, vol. ii., vi. 2.

Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva." In a like spirit, long before Cæsar, during the weary siege of Veii, which lasted ten years, the besiegers admired the "Juno Regina" of Veii, who had inspired the city's splendid resistance: and Livy relates how, when at length the place fell, the captors with all reverence drew near the sacred image, and asked if she were willing to follow them to Rome. On receiving a sign of acquiescence, the idol symbol of the goddess was brought to the city of the conquerors.*

This spirit of accommodation tended to facilitate the settlement of the conquered people. There were no religious antipathies to be guarded against. In many cases, as we have seen above in the instance of Veii, the strange gods of the conquered were brought to Rome and even adored there. These introductions of foreign, especially of oriental gods, who had apparently little in common with the ancient Italian deities, began before the days of the Empire. We read of the triumvirs, after the death of Julius Cæsar, building a temple to Isis and Serapis. Rapidly the influence of oriental cults increased at Rome. Mithras, adored in far distant Persia, became in the early days of the Empire a favourite divinity among the lower classes of the metropolis of the world. In the latter days of the Antonines this eastern cult grew more and more popular. In the third century the temples of Mithras became perhaps the most sought after and thronged of the many Pagan sanctuaries in Rome and in the great provincial centres.

It is a debated question whether or no this curious admixture of oriental cults, this gradual association of the deities of Egypt and Syria and Persia with the ancient worship of Italy and of Rome, injured or strengthened Paganism.

On the one hand it is clear that the introduction of the emotional rites of the Syrian divinities, the mysteries of Egyptian Isis, the strange and picturesque ritual of the

* It is true that the "Juno Regina" of Veii was one of the old Italian deities, but I have quoted this as a striking and familiar instance of the recognition and adoption by Rome of the special deity of a rival and conquered city

Persian Mithras, to take prominent examples, accorded ill with the original designs of Augustus, so happily set forth by his friend and confidant Virgil. These eastern forms of worship really had little in common with the comparatively calm, grave devotion paid to the gods whom Augustus professed to revere, and of whom Virgil sang. The emotional extravagances of eastern religion were distrusted at heart by the old Roman spirit which Augustus and his friends, by their zeal and industry, contrived to awake.

On the other hand it has been ably argued that without this oriental admixture of passion and mystery, the ancient Roman cult, with its simple ritual, its cold and majestic creed, would never have obtained a permanent hold on the great cosmopolitan cities over which a Tiberius and a Trajan, a Hadrian and a Marcus ruled; that never without this new element of oriental worship could Paganism have held its own for more than two centuries and a half against the transparent truth, the quiet earnestness, and the sublime teaching of that Christianity which in the end swept all these false religions away.

The answer to such interesting and debatable questions tarries; it will never be fully supplied. One thing, however, is clear. Under the Empire Paganism, allied as it was with the majesty of Rome, was a real power; and though the eventual issue of its long contest with Christianity was, as we see now, never for an instant doubtful, it was a long and deadly struggle, and was only won by the brave patience, the constant endurance of suffering, the quiet, burning faith, of several generations of Christian men and women in many lands, who in countless instances welcomed death and torture rather than deny their beautiful true creed.

To a superficial observer it seems strange, on first thought, that the Roman who more than tolerated all religions, who even had welcomed the gods of every nation with whom he came in contact, yet made a stern exception of the religion of the Christian, and the Christ whom the Christian worshipped. It seems, indeed, strange how it came to pass that in Rome, the religious as well as the secular capital

ot the world, where the gods of all the peoples of the vast empire possessed special sanctuaries and altars, Christ alone was proscribed, and His votaries alone were reckoned as outlaws and enemies of the State.

But, after all, this singular position of Christianity in the Roman Empire, this standing alone among all religions as the one proscribed and forbidden, was owing to the conduct of the Christians themselves. Other religions, eastern and western, were content to dwell together, content mutually to acknowledge and respect each other. And in Rome, the religious capital of the world, as we have noticed, the Persian Mithras, the Egyptian Isis, and the Roman Jupiter each had their temples, their sanctuaries and their altars, side by side. The sanctity of each was acknowledged by the Roman people. The worshippers among the citizens and dwellers in Rome indifferently adored at one or other of these shrines. But the Christian was sternly forbidden by the tenets of his holy faith to make any such concession. To him the Egyptian Isis, the Persian Mithras, the Roman Jupiter were equally abhorrent. They were each and all *idols*. In the words of his sacred oracles, "He that sacrificeth unto any God, save unto the Lord only, he shall be destroyed."* (Exod. xxii. 20.)

* In the above study Christianity is dwelt upon as being the solitary example of a religion not tolerated by the Roman power. The Jew is not noticed here; although the Jewish religion too, owing to its intense horror of all idolatry, would have stood outside the pale of cults acknowledged by Rome. "Judæa gens contumelia numinum insignis" (the Jewish race conspicuous for its contempt for the gods), wrote Pliny. (*Hist. Nat.*, xiii. 4.) But at a comparatively early date in the Empire the Jewish religion became involved in the grave political complications which disturbed all the relations of the Jewish nation and the Empire. Before A.D. 70 the immemorial sacred capital of the Jews was stormed and captured by Titus as the result of the great Jewish revolt in the reign of Vespasian. The people, however, still stubbornly refused to submit, and the long succession of formidable uprisings was only closed in A.D. 136, when Jerusalem was again taken, and this time razed to the ground. The people were banished, and vast numbers perished. After this terrible punishment, inflicted by the Emperor Hadrian, the Jews may be said to have existed no more as a localised nation. Henceforth the scattered and impoverished people were not of sufficient importance to be objects of any real jealousy or dread on the part of the Imperial Government. They were too few and too insignificant. Nor is it unlikely that this poor, impoverished remnant, in spite of their exclusive religion, were looked on often

It was this stern, rigid refusal of the Christian to share in the common toleration of religions which excited the bitter wrath of all the Pagan world; it was this which united all the Pagan religions against him. He was the common enemy of them all, and to crush him, to destroy him and his exclusive faith, was the aim of every serious Pagan. Thus the restless persecution of the Christian by the votaries of all the Pagan religions in every portion of the world of Rome during the first three centuries is largely accounted for.

It was indeed a war to the death, and the history of early Christianity chronicles the events of that long, weary conflict and its result.

SECTION VI.—THE PHILOSOPHERS AND THE PAGAN REVIVAL.

THE higher teaching in Rome between the days of Augustus and the days of Marcus and his son, roughly the period included in the first and second centuries, is well exemplified in the works we possess of the later Stoic philosophers. We shall only be able to touch on the fringes of this study, and we simply propose to give a few references to the words of two of the most distinguished of these teachers, Seneca and Epictetus. Yet even these brief references will give us some insight into the attitude of Paganism on the side of philosophic teaching, in the period of its mortal struggle with Christianity.

Seneca was the tutor and for a time the adviser of the Emperor Nero; his death is dated A.D. 65. Epictetus taught somewhat later, during the reigns of Domitian and Trajan—some placing his death as late as the reign of Hadrian. At all events, he lived well into the second century. Marcus, the Emperor and philosopher, who in some ways may be looked

even with favour, on account of the services they not unfrequently rendered, as informers and spies, against the feared and hated Christians; as, for instance, in the martyrdom of Polycarp at Smyrna. Then, too, it must not be overlooked that the Jewish religion was never aggressive. It rarely sought for proselytes. Very different was Christianity; among the worshippers of Jesus, every one more or less was a missionary, an active and earnest proselytiser.

upon as the pupil of the great teachers of this late Stoic school, whose words and "Meditations" we have already touched upon, carries us on to 181, the year of his death.

We have dwelt on the great change which undoubtedly passed over Paganism in the reign of Augustus and the two following centuries, and on the striking difference between the withering scepticism of the age of Julius Cæsar and the superstitious devotion which so largely characterised the days of Marcus. By this strong current of devotion, so to speak, the philosopher teachers were largely influenced; and their teaching in turn helped, especially among the higher ranks of society, to make Paganism in the epoch of its fierce struggle with Christianity something of a reality.

Their efforts were largely directed to reforming the popular religion, and in some way bringing men's minds to the belief in the unity of God. They would persuade men that the many names under which the supreme deity was adored in different lands only represented one Almighty power. It is doubtful, however, if this higher teaching ever really penetrated the masses of the people; and it is more than probable that the vast majority of ordinary folk, until the day of the final victory of Christianity, continued to understand and to practise religion in the old way, worshipping Minerva and Venus, Vesta and Juno, Mars and Esculapius, as deities especially connected with and disposing the issues of the home and the hearth, of peace and war, of sickness and health, much as their ancestors had done. But there is no doubt that an effort to teach men the grand Unity of God, worshipped under whatever different names and symbols, was made in the schools of the great philosophic teachers of the first, second, and third centuries; helping to give, among the more thoughtful at all events, a renewed reality to a religion which had well-nigh, if not entirely, lost its power over the hearts of cultured people.*

* "Under different names we adore the One God Whose eternal power gives life to all, and in adoring this Divinity under its several attributes we adore the One Eternal Power. We invoke, through the mediation of the lower Gods, the Father of Gods and men, and thus in various forms of religion the same God worshipped by all men of different nationalities." So wrote Maximus of Madaura to S. Augustine (*S. Aug. Epist.* 16).

Thus the philosopher, the thought-leader and teacher in Rome, the statesman who ruled Rome, the patriot who loved Rome with a great passion, for different reasons and in different ways set themselves to restore—we might say to reform—the fast dying religion of Paganism; and they were partly successful. They breathed into its wild legends a new life by giving them a new meaning; they prolonged its existence for well-nigh three hundred years; they gave it vitality and power to contend with Christianity all through that period of struggle, and although in the long run they were defeated, and in the end the cause for which they struggled was utterly and for ever ruined as far as the Roman Empire was concerned, the contest was a long and painful one, and for a time, as far as men could see, the issue hung in the balance. The long battle between Christianity and Paganism eventuated in a complete victory for Christianity, because the conflict was between truth and falsehood, and in the long run truth will ever be victorious on earth as in Heaven.

It is the fashion to describe the great contest between Paganism and Christianity as a combat between evil and good, as a struggle of darkness against light. Such a general presentment may on the whole be accurate, but it is easy to exaggerate. It is too alluring a task for the Christian historian and apologist in his desire to magnify the final victory of the cause he justly loves, to underrate the efforts made by earnest serious men brought up in the atmosphere of Paganism, and living all their lives amidst its associations, to raise the brotherhood of man to a higher and purer level. That eminent and devout teacher, Augustine, acknowledges the noble efforts of the philosophers of the earlier Empire when he writes that "Christianity has found the only way which leads to the land of peace, but the philosopher had seen that blessed land from afar, and had saluted it."

Now the great teachers of philosophy, in their efforts to reform the old religion, were not content with endeavouring to inspire their disciples with a loftier, nobler, and truer conception of the Divinity worshipped under so many and often such grotesque forms, but they pressed home besides

in their teaching a higher and purer morality, a morality indeed so exalted that many have supposed that they learned it from the life or from the writings of Christians.

To quote a few examples of their moral teaching: Seneca* (*circa* A.D. 50–60) has something very beautiful to say of the charity or love which is so distinguishing a feature in Christian practice. The Pagan master would have his disciples console and lighten the sufferings of others by that true sympathy which is often more efficacious than mere gifts. He would have them tender and gentle even to sinners, even to their enemies. He charges them to be generous to the poor and needy; he teaches that the son should be ransomed and restored to the mother, that the slave and the gladiator should be if possible redeemed, that the holy rites of sepulture, so precious a privilege in the eyes of the Roman world, should not be denied even to the remains of a criminal. He would have his disciples live among their fellows, as though God were ever present and looking on, God who was ever with men, at once their protector and friend.

Very sublime indeed appears to have been Seneca's conception of God, who must not only be worshipped by men, but must be loved by them ("colitur et amatur"). Bitterly he inveighed against the popular Epicurean notion that God or the gods were indifferent to us and careless of our woes. Surely, he writes, one who could teach *this*, was deaf to all the voices or prayers ever going up, was blind to the hands clasped in supplication in every part of the world! †

* In this necessarily brief study we have only cited from Seneca and Epictetus; but these were only two of the masters who taught in this age in the Roman school of philosophy. They are the two best known, but it would be a mistake to suppose they stood alone. They are conspicuous and illustrious examples of their school, nothing more.

† The teaching of Seneca was no doubt immeasurably superior to anything which had hitherto proceeded from the older philosophic schools. Now, had he learned it from Christian teachers? Tertullian (*circa* A.D. 200) would seem to suspect this when he writes, "Seneca is often one of us" (Seneca saepe noster). It has been argued that Seneca could scarcely have known S. Paul in the flesh, as S. Paul's visits to Rome were subsequent to the date of Seneca's writings. But there is little doubt that as far as *dates* are concerned he might

Some, indeed, of the conceptions of the Deity are most striking; it would seem as though the Pagan philosopher was a student of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, when he teaches that the gods ask not at our hands the sacrifices of oxen, or the offerings of gold and silver for their temples, or for money contributions to be poured into their treasuries; what they require from us is the offering of a heart at once devout and just. The immortals need no lofty buildings of stone, storey reared on storey; what is required by them of man is that he should build them an unseen sanctuary in his heart.

Little heed, however, was paid to such lofty and purely spiritual ideas of worship by the Pagan peoples who inhabited the broad Roman Empire; and even such earnest and devout disciples of philosophy as the Emperor Marcus were little moved by such noble conceptions, though they emanated from the greatest of the Stoic masters. It was Marcus who thought, in the course of his campaign on the Danube, to propitiate the favour of the immortals by throwing two lions into the great river! It was the same pious and devoted servitor of the gods who, before the expedition against the Marcomanni, brought out and exposed the images of the gods for seven days in Rome in accordance with an ancient Pagan custom; and on that occasion, too, vowed to sacrifice, in the event of the war being successful, such innumerable beasts, that the famous epigram recorded by Ammianus Marcellinus was written: "The white oxen to

have met S. Peter, who we believe probably lived and taught in Rome, while Seneca was in power, many years before S. Paul came to the capital. But without *personally* coming in contact with any great Christian teacher such as Peter or Paul, the echo of their voices, perhaps some of their writings even, might have reached the philosopher. The Christian community of Rome, although it was pointedly ignored by so many of the earlier writers of the Empire, must have been well known and carefully watched by the Government. Nero's selection of the "Sect" as the object of his infamous accusation on the occasion of the burning of Rome tells us this. It seems to be beyond dispute that Christian teaching more or less affected and coloured, if it did not do more, many of the doctrines and precepts of the later Stoic school of philosophy from and after the middle of the first century. Jerome even refers to letters which passed between Paul and Seneca. The letters, however, in question are undoubtedly forgeries.

Marcus Cæsar, hail! Alas, if you return a conqueror we shall all die!"

But while so many of Seneca's beautiful words possess the aroma of evangelical teaching, we often come upon some sentence, some reflection, which tells us that the writer, although perhaps inspired not unfrequently by some divine thought whose source must be sought and found in the words of the Founder of Christianity, or of some one of His disciples, yet lived in a very different atmosphere from that breathed in the communities of Christians; as, for instance, when the Pagan master speaks of the lofty platform occupied by one who in good earnest is virtuous after his exalted pattern. Such a one, he argues, draws near the gods and becomes their equal* ("cum dis ex pari vivit")—and even in certain respects is the superior of the god (Jupiter).† Very different indeed would have been the estimate of his life, made by a holy and humble man of heart who formed one among the congregation of a Peter or of a Clement!

Very striking, again, are many of the thoughts on religion of Epictetus, who carries on the tradition of the teaching of the philosophic reformers of Paganism into the next generation, when Trajan was on the throne; perhaps even as late as the days of Hadrian, well on in the second century. Epictetus would have all sorts and conditions of men pray to the great God. "As for me, I am growing old," said the sage, "what can I do better than praise God? I must do this, I would have all join me here. I would say to Jupiter,‡ 'Do with me what thou willest. Take me where thou pleasest, I am thine, I belong wholly to thee.'" Very touchingly, in words which might well have been used in a chapel or oratory of the Christians, Epictetus thus talks of prayer to the Supreme Almighty Immortal. "Shut your door; and, in the solitude of your chamber, think not that you are alone; you are not—because God is with you." "Lord,"

* Compare *Epist.* 59, 14.

† Compare *Epist.* 53, 11—*De provid.* 6, 6.

‡ Jupiter was ever a favourite deity among the Romans; to him a supremacy seems always willingly to have been accorded.

pleaded Epictetus, "have I ever complained of Thy dealings with me, or found fault with Thy Providence? I have been sick because it was Thy will, I have been poor, ay, and joyfully, because Thou didst will it. . . . Wouldst Thou have me go hence to-day from this glorious world, I go hence willingly; I thank Thee for suffering me to be with Thee, that I am able to gaze at Thy works, and that I have had power to grasp somewhat of the meaning of Thy government."

Thus these philosophers who taught in Rome from the days of Augustus to the days of Marcus and his son, endeavoured to lead their disciples to pray, to pour out their hearts to the supreme God. The Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, A.D. 161–80, was their faithful disciple, and willingly, and from his heart served the immortals; carrying, indeed, his religious service often to the verge of immoderate superstition.

To sum up. There was much in the moral teaching of these masters of the Stoic philosophy of the first and second centuries which resembled the precepts of Christianity. There was emphatically *something* in their teaching loftier, purer, more real than had ever appeared before in the teaching of any Pagan philosophic schools. It is at least highly probable that some echoes of the words of Jesus and of His disciples, which had been repeated again and again in the Christian communities of Rome and of other great centres of thought in the Empire, had reached the ears of men like Seneca, Epictetus, and other masters of the later Stoic school, had strongly influenced them, and to a certain extent had coloured their teaching; more, however, than this cannot be said. Neither Seneca, Epictetus, nor the other philosophers of this school, were Christians, or even in any sense could be said to teach Christianity. No Christian dogma in any form ever appears in their words. If they were acquainted with Christian doctrines, they rejected them apparently without examination. Marcus, the Emperor, their most illustrious disciple, evidently might have had before him such writings as the "Apologies" of Justin. It is more than doubtful if he ever read them. He disliked the Christians, as we have seen,

with an intense dislike; and even his sense of justice was not sufficient to induce him to treat the sect with common fairness. In his eyes the followers of Jesus were, for reasons upon which we have briefly dwelt, a positive danger to the Empire. And the attitude of Marcus was no doubt more or less the attitude of the masters of that great philosophic school of the later Stoics of which he was so distinguished a disciple.

We hear little of this school of philosophers after the passing away of the renowned Emperor in A.D. 181.* Various causes were at work which explain this rapid waning of its power and influence. In the reign of Marcus it had reached the highest point it ever touched. The great Emperor was a faithful disciple, and his advisers, and the men whom he chose for the various administrative posts throughout his vast Empire, were largely selected out of the ranks of its best known professors and followers. But after the extinction of the House of the Antonines in A.D. 193, the influence of Stoicism very rapidly waned.

One obvious reason was no doubt its failure to commend itself to the mass of the people. Cicero, somewhat before the rise of the new Stoics, tells us of the general unpopularity of philosophy with the multitude. It never found the key to the hearts of the people. The Stoic philosophy appealed, and often with power, to many of the cultured and the thoughtful among the upper classes of Roman society, but it never penetrated into the deep stratum which lay beneath this comparatively small section of the citizens of Rome. For instance, Marcus, the Emperor, the greatest and most influential of the disciples of the later Stoic philosophers, failed completely to induce his people to second his noble and earnest efforts to do away with the sanguinary and demoralising games of the amphitheatre. They could not or would not understand him.

* The philosophic teachers of the age, of which we are writing, by no means *all* belonged to the later Stoics. There were in Rome, and in a much less degree in other great cities, other schools of philosophic teaching. But the Stoics were indisputably by far the most prominent, both in the number of their adherents and in the great influence which they exercised.

The lofty morality, the high and severe life recommended by such teachers as Seneca and Epictetus, was utterly unpleasing, perhaps incomprehensible, to the pleasure-loving, thoughtless, careless multitude. Such teaching, often beautiful and true, though somewhat cold and severe, needed something more to commend itself to the people generally than the eloquent words of the Stoic teacher, or even the high example of a Stoic Emperor. That *something* existed among the Christians, but was utterly wanting outside their circle.

Then again, the philosophic teaching of Seneca, Epictetus, and the other later Stoic masters, powerful and seemingly heart-searching though it often was, made little or no effort to reach the poor and humble dwellings of the struggling trader, or, lower still, the crowded and squalid homes of the artisans; still less did it care to speak to the slave, though one of its great exponents was a slave himself. Its precepts were admirable; its doctors, as we have seen, now and again vied even with the Christian teachers in their earnest desire to persuade the disciples of their school that all men were brothers, and that all alike were deserving of pity, help and comfort; but they went no further. They spoke to a select few only. Their words were rarely heard beyond the walls of their lecture halls. They could talk beautifully *of* the poor, the slave, and that great army of sufferers who make up the rank and file of the inhabitants of a great city such as Rome; but they never spoke *to* these—the poor, the slave, and the sufferer.

Strangely different indeed was the way of working adopted by the teachers of that widespread sect, the unresting opponents of Stoic Pagan philosophy.

Unweariedly the teachers of Christianity pursued their propaganda; they had no public lecture halls, the scenes of their instruction were the frequent religious meetings of believers and enquirers—meetings held in poor upper rooms belonging to artisans and little traders; in chapels attached to the houses of the great and powerful; in crypts or catacombs, where slept the loved dead of the Christian community.

The message was never silent; it was spoken with equal fervour to the patrician and the slave. It recognised no rank, it cared little for human culture. Indeed, it especially sought for the outcast, the humble, the unlearned. Never before had any religious teachers taken pains and trouble to seek out the poor, undistinguished, down-trodden folk, but strange to say it was among *such* that Christianity chose especially to deliver its beautiful, life-giving, true message.

And it was rewarded. The ceaseless propaganda among the poor and the despised—going on as it did year after year in city and in country, in many lands and among many nations, a propaganda carried on too, for the most part, amidst circumstances of grave danger and ever-present peril to the unwearied teachers—touched the hearts of the people; and the disciples of the new faith were, as the second century grew old, counted by thousands and tens of thousands.

Still, though we recognise its especial weakness, its impotence among the masses, we must not underrate the assistance which the philosophy of the later Stoics rendered to Paganism in its hour of need. It was a real help, but it only helped it among the *cultured* classes. It did nothing to popularise it among the masses of the people. Other influences than philosophy were at work which attached the people to the old Pagan religion, which kept them in vast numbers faithful to the old gods, and to the old idol ritual practised in the stately temples where their forefathers had worshipped. We have dwelt on some of these influences already at some length—influences which put off for a long period the final ruin of Paganism.*

* Another influence, that of Porphyry and the teachers of the Neo-Platonic school in the second half of the third and the earlier years of the fourth century, is touched upon later (pp. 409, 410).

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHRISTIANS UNDER THE ANTONINES, A.D. 138 TO A.D. 180.

In the reigns of the Antonines, Pius and Marcus, who followed Hadrian, A.D. 138 to A.D. 180, despite the generally wise and beneficial administration of these two princes, who justly are deemed the noblest and best of the early line of Emperors, the situation of the Christian communities in the midst of the Pagan population of the Empire grew gradually more precarious. The dangers to which they were exposed increased in number, while the safeguards, which the wisdom and understanding of rulers like Trajan, and Hadrian in the earlier years of his reign, had provided against popular clamour, were often more or less disregarded or evaded.

Outwardly, at all events, the spirit of the rescript of Hadrian coloured the letters addressed by Antoninus Pius to several of the Greek cities in the provinces of Achaia and Macedonia; wherein he gave orders that mere noisy clamour on the part of the people should not be counted as a formal accusation of the Christians to be taken official account of by the governor. Letters, too, bearing on the same points were sent to Athens and the Greek cities in general.

A good example of the effect of illegal popular clamour in the case of accused Christians occurs in the history of the martyrdom of Polycarp, already related in the sketch of the great Bishop's career, which took place in A.D. 155, when Antoninus Pius was reigning. We read that the proconsul wished to give the accused Bishop a fuller hearing and a formal trial, but that the tumult and shouting of the populace induced him to sanction immediate execution.

There appear to have been in the reign of Pius many of

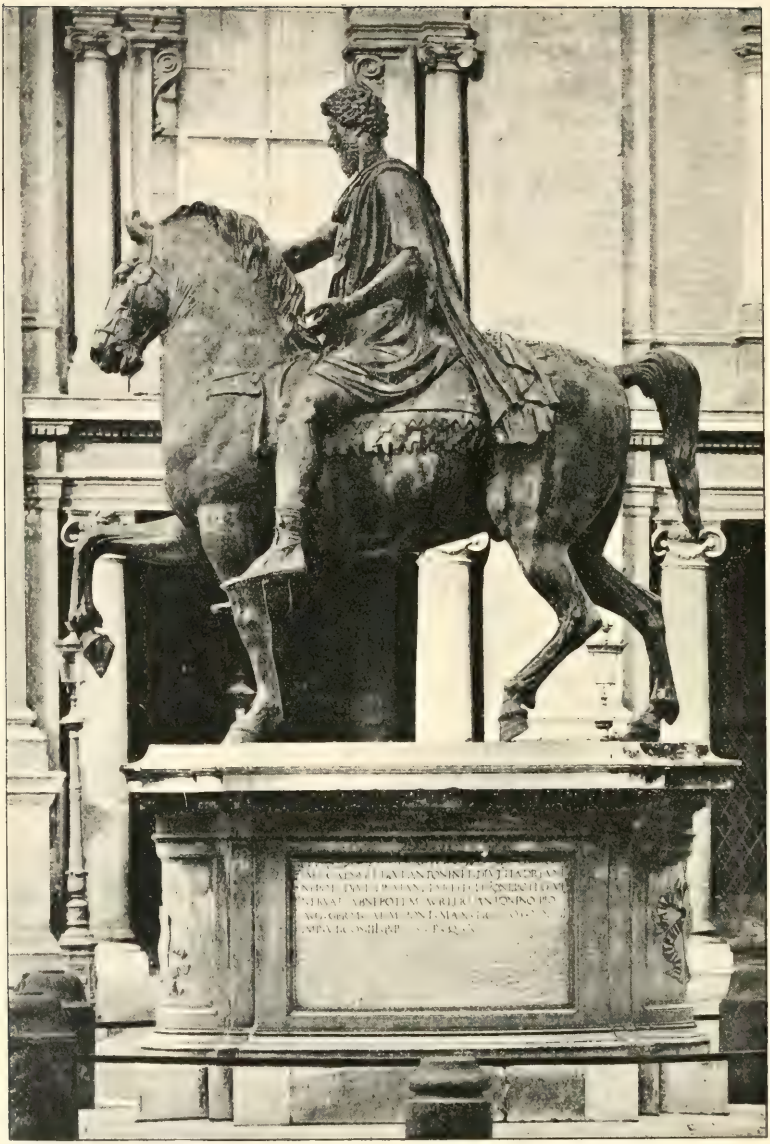


Photo: Alinari & Cook, Rome.

MARCUS AURELIUS

Statue in the Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome.

these popular outbursts of feeling in Greek cities against the Christians. This points clearly to the gradual revival of Paganism, which was so prominent a feature in the reign of Marcus, who followed Pius on the throne.

Although the Antonines made no ostensible alteration in the policy laid down by their predecessors on the questions connected with the relations of Christianity and the Empire, yet, as we have seen, the Imperial rescripts were of so general a nature that they could be interpreted in a sense favourable or unfavourable to the religionists to whom they referred, according to the disposition of the particular governor; in which no doubt the supposed bias, favourable or otherwise towards the Christian communities, of the all-powerful reigning Emperor at Rome, would be an important factor. The pro-consul was certainly likely to shape his policy closely on the lines which he judged would be acceptable to the Emperor. Now the feeling of the Antonines was never favourable to the growing sect, and it became more hostile as time advanced. The policy of Antoninus Pius may be said to have been generally indifferent, but the indifference gradually shaded into dislike, into a fixed idea that Christianity was un-Roman; and in the Emperor Marcus this idea became more and more pronounced. The love of justice, the hatred of all oppression and tyranny, which so strongly characterised the rule of the Antonines, to some extent shielded these quiet and scrupulously loyal sectaries from all open cruelty and high-handed acts of oppression; but the evident dislike of the great Emperors, especially of Marcus, and their evident mistrust of the aim and object of Christianity, made the profession of the Faith in their reigns very burdensome, often very dangerous. Hence the roll of martyrs in Rome and the provinces became longer and longer in the times of the two noblest and most upright of the Emperors.

Among the early Christian writings that we possess in their entirety, the first "Apology" of Justin, presented to Antoninus Pius *circa* A.D. 145–50, holds a conspicuous place. It is the work of a scholar and thinker, a man versed in all the learning of his day and time, who had embraced Christianity only when

he was, comparatively speaking, well advanced in life, and had already carefully examined the principal cults practised by the various peoples inhabiting the vast Roman Empire. The first "Apology" of Justin was addressed to Antoninus Pius, when that sovereign had been reigning some few years. In the course of his elaborate and deeply interesting plea for the one proscribed religion, the writer, among other points, presses upon the Emperor the wonderful loyalty to constituted authority always shown by the persecuted sect. They never hesitated, for instance, to pay at once the Imperial taxes. The only liberty they claimed was the liberty of conscience which bade them adore one God. In everything else they were ready to obey with joy. They recognised the royalty and supremacy of Rome, and were in the habit of praying that Divine help might be given to the Sovereign. Justin pleads, too, with great force that the sum of Christian teaching is that nothing escapes the eye of God, that He sees and punishes eternally the wicked man, the conspirator, the self-seeker, with a punishment exactly commensurate with his evil deeds; that the same God, too, rewards the virtuous man in proportion to his righteous works. Surely such teaching as this, he argues, is a real and substantial help to the laws of a good government like that of Imperial Rome, and gives stability to society.

Further, he contrasts the pure morals of the Christian sect with the disgraceful examples set by the Pagan gods. He indignantly repudiates the scandalous charges made against the Christian worship, and paints in a few simple and eloquent sentences its most sacred portion, the solemn Eucharistic service. Pious, pure, peace-loving—surely Christians had the right of protesting before the Emperor against the crying injustice of the Roman laws against their religion; laws by which the bearing of the name of Christian was proscribed and punished with death. In their case no inquiry was necessary, whether or not they had committed crimes. The mere fact of their being Christians was sufficient to condemn them. They were judged and put to death simply on account of the Name they bore, whilst, on the other hand, the mere renouncement of the Name procured their immediate acquittal. In the name

of justice and mercy, he argued, let not Rome judge and punish a word or Name, but let her judge and punish *acts*, if any such be found worthy of punishment. When a Christian is haled before Rome's tribunal, at once let his life be subject to a rigid examination, let the court inquire carefully if he has done aught amiss, but do not let the mere name of a Christian, which embraces so much that is beautiful and good, be imputed to him as a crime. Let not one who has never injured any, who is a loyal subject of the Empire, be regarded as a criminal deserving of the severest punishment; let the Christian be given the common privilege which the Roman law gives to all accused persons. It is surely monstrous that a special law should exist in the solitary case of one only charged with being a Christian.

It was some years after the presentation of his first "Apology" for Christianity that the second of these appeals that common fairness should be shown to the accused Christians was addressed to the Emperors (Pius and Marcus) and the Senate. When Justin wrote his second "Apology" in or about the last year of the reign of Antoninus Pius, things looked very dark for Christianity throughout the Empire. The reigning Emperor had no sympathy with the worshippers of Jesus, who resolutely stood aloof from all the religions favoured and sanctioned by the State. His adopted son and successor, Marcus, was known openly to dislike them, though the reason has ever been a subject of wonder and inquiry. No new rescripts on the Christian question had indeed been put out. But the old Imperial directions, which issued from the chanceries of Trajan and Hadrian, were still in force; and their vagueness, which left much to the discretion of the provincial governor, was now sadly inimical to Christians, when it was understood that the Emperor himself was personally hostile to the sect. The interpretation now of the old rescripts by the provincial governor was apt to be very different from the interpretation of the same Imperial commands when the reigning Emperor was known to be opposed to persecution in any form, and when men were conscious that he

only reluctantly acquiesced in extreme measures if the fact of the accused being a Christian were forced upon the magistrates and officials of the Empire.

In the middle of the second century there was already an active propaganda of Christianity carried on in numberless families by means of Christian slaves, confidential servants, teachers of various arts and accomplishments, physicians, and others who had access to the inner life of families. It is an error to suppose that Pagan society in the second century had to seek instruction in Christianity secretly in some little chapel of a wealthy Roman's house, or in a sepulchral crypt of a dark and narrow catacomb. That teaching and preaching, probably of a high order, under the charge of some learned and devoted master, was constantly to be found in their most secret and hidden places, was no doubt the case; but the propaganda of the Faith was by no means confined to these little centres. There were few families in Rome after a time that did not count among their numbers one or more Christians. Often these members filled only humble positions, but their widespread influence was incalculable. Justin, in his second "Apology," as the crown of his argument, showing the great and lofty influence of the Faith, gives us a striking example of how Christianity influenced the home life. A Roman citizen and his wife, of the middle class but evidently in good circumstances, had been for some time living a disorderly sinful existence; a life too common in that age of luxury and vice, when the popular Paganism was almost powerless as a teacher of the nobler life, or as an influence for good. Through some of those quiet, powerful influences of which we have spoken the wife became a Christian, and at once her old life became changed. Not so her husband. He went on in his evil ways, plunging even deeper into disgraceful sin, till at length the union became insupportable to the wife, who applied for a divorce. Then the wicked husband, seeking for the reasons which had influenced his wife, divined that she had become a Christian. The Pagan in that age, when fairly unprejudiced, swiftly appraised the

purifying influence of Christianity. At once, if any marked change of life was apparent, if any open opposition to fashionable vice or sin was made, the true cause was forthwith suspected. So it happened in the case of the couple of Justin's story; the angry husband at once publicly charged his wife with being a Christian. The Christian woman, through interest or possibly bribes, contrived to delay the trial. In the meantime her husband, through some outside persuasion, dropped the charge against his wife; and having learned that one Ptolemæus had been the instrument of her conversion, made him the object of accusation. This charge was pressed, and although no persecution was raging and no special desire just then existed to hunt down Christians, Ptolemæus was tried and sentenced to death. A bystander in the court named Lucius, listening to the Roman Prefect's sentence, appealed to the judge, asking him how he could condemn to death a man convicted of no crime, simply because he had confessed himself a Christian—surely such a sentence was unworthy alike of a pious Emperor and the sacred Senate? The Prefect deigned no reply to the bold inquirer other than, "You, too, seem to be a Christian." "Yes," said Lucius, "I am," upon which open confession Lucius too was led to immediate capital punishment. A third Christian present in the court, fired by these examples, confessed his faith, and the three died together.

In the course of an argument on the strength of the attachment of Christians to their Master Jesus, and on the numbers and varieties found among the martyrs of his day, Justin beautifully remarks that "Socrates (whom Marcus revered) never had a disciple who was willing to die for him. Jesus, on the other hand, has a crowd of such devoted witnesses. Artisans, men and women drawn from the very dregs of the people; philosophers, too, and cultured men, who were all willing and ready to die for His doctrine. The power which strengthened these was not from human wisdom. It was the strength of God." These martyrs, to whom Justin was specially alluding, belonging to all sorts

and conditions of men, won their crown, be it remembered, in a period of comparative stillness.

The events narrated had taken place in the reign of Antoninus Pius, when persecution was inactive. But when Pius passed away, the nineteen years (A.D. 161 to A.D. 180) of the reign of his successor, the noblest of the Pagan Emperors, proved nevertheless the hardest period of trial the followers of Jesus had as yet experienced. More Christian blood flowed under the rule of the Imperial Philosopher, whose "Thoughts" or "Meditations" reveal apparently one of the tenderest of consciences, than was shed in the sharp but comparatively brief persecutions of Nero and Domitian, or during the long reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius.

A new and harsher interpretation was given to the Imperial rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian, and to the still earlier precedents of Vespasian and the Flavian princes, in the difficult questions of procedure against accused Christians. No doubt, too, the spirit which prompted the government of Marcus to persecute, emanating as it did from so revered and admired an Emperor, not a little influenced Septimius Severus at the close of the century when he issued his sterner anti-Christian rescripts. From the accession of Marcus onwards, whenever an Emperor on the throne was not favourably inclined to the followers of Jesus, the persecution of the Christians assumed a more general as well as a more deadly aspect.

But the effect of these harsher measures, the result of this bitter opposition, was very different from what the Imperial Government contemplated. The general proscription exercised an enduring and powerful influence on the scattered communities. It had the effect of uniting the persecuted and harassed Christians more and ever more closely together, while it never seriously diminished the number of Christians; the new converts being far more numerous than the martyrs and the "lapsed." As the years passed on, the Church thus tried became through adversity more strong, more bravely patient.

Hitherto we have passed over all events, however interesting, connected with the secular chronicle of the Roman world, unless such events were closely connected with the history of Christianity. We have dismissed with only a very brief notice the careers of those great men who played the part of Masters of the World in the first and second centuries, excepting so far as their policy specially affected Christianity; as was the case with Augustus, who may be said to have first built up that Paganism which for so long made an effectual stand against the religion of Jesus, and with Hadrian, whose name will be ever connected with the last great Jewish war.

The Emperor Marcus Aurelius, however, demands a special study, since his policy introduces a new and specially unfriendly departure in the relations of the Roman world with the many Christian communities, which more or less affected Christianity until the hour of its final triumph about a century and a half after his accession.*

We know much of the inner life of Marcus, since we possess a private diary of his, revealing to us the innermost thoughts which guided and influenced much of his public life. These "Thoughts," or "Meditations," are private memoranda,† written often hastily, without arrangement, more often in the tent when he was with his army than in the palace. As a kind of commentary on this "diary" we have some charming letters addressed to him by his friend and teacher Fronto, letters comparatively recently discovered. The intense "religiousness" of Marcus is striking. Here, face to face with Christianity, we have a Pagan who apparently believed in the Roman gods rehabilitated by the pious calculating care of Augustus. We will give just a few extracts from Fronto's correspondence. The teacher writes without fear to the absolute master of the world.

* The association of Verus in the Empire by Marcus hardly requires notice. He had little or no weight in determining policy, and died, somewhat opportunely for Rome, after some eight years of joint rule, in A.D. 169.

† "La sincerité de cette interrogation solitaire en fait un des plus précieux monuments de l'antiquité." Champagny: *Les Antonins*, vol. iii., livre vi., ch. i.

"Be careful not to play the Cæsar—do not plunge into the waters of Imperial enticements; keep yourself simple, good, serious, the friend of justice, ready for all duties, kind. . . . *Honour the gods.* Save men, life is but short. There is but one prize to be won in our earthly career, to have striven after a holy aim, and to have lived a life which has been useful to others. In all things be a follower of (your adoptive father) Antoninus Pius. Call to mind his unresting love of work, his steady friendships. Think of his piety, never superstitious" (there was, perhaps, a warning here of a danger Fronto suspected); "so order your life that the end will find you as it found him, living in the peace of a good conscience." And again, "Love all men, yes, and from your heart. Be patient with the wicked man, be sorry for him. . . . You never can be quite sure if something hidden from you cannot be fairly urged as a plea for his conduct. And you—are you perfectly pure yourself? Even if you are free from the faults and errors you condemn, is it not perhaps from a vanity which preserves you from them?"

In Fronto's advice, in Marcus' "Thoughts" or "Meditations," there is much that reminds us of Christianity; unsuspected Christian influences are dimly perceptible. Indeed, there is very little in ancient philosophy or teaching at all comparable to or even resembling the lofty conceptions which we meet with continually in these "Thoughts" or "Meditations" and correspondence of Marcus. But everywhere, in "Meditations" and in letters alike, constant references to the gods meet us again and again. Yet the good Emperor had no fixed belief; at times he even seemed to doubt the very existence of the gods whose names were ever on his lips. Longing intensely to believe in a guiding and directing Power, he would in his superstitious anxiety even turn from the ancient gods of Rome to the Eastern deities, with their corrupt and corrupting rites, with their occult mysteries; sympathising with all religions save one. For towards Christianity he was ever cold, ever hostile: once only he alludes to it in his "Meditations," and then with accents of petulant scorn. It is difficult to guess the reasons for

Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome

THE FORUM.

View from the Capitol

this hatred which the great, earnest, devout Emperor constantly showed to Christianity. The only explanation possible is that Marcus was trained in the school of Roman statesmanship, which regarded Christianity as utterly opposed to all the cherished traditions of Roman government, which taught that to be a Christian and at the same time a Roman was simply impossible, that the peculiar and exclusive tenets of the sect held them generally aloof from all offices in which they could serve the State, and play the part of good citizens; that they were in fact as citizens ἄχρηστοι (useless). It does not seem as though the Emperor ever took the pains to examine the principles of a faith which he thoroughly distrusted and disliked, or ever really read a weighty document like the second "Apology" of Justin which was addressed to the Emperors, or that he ever came in contact with any really great Christian personality, who might have influenced him at least to give the Christian cause a fair and patient hearing.

In spite of his unfeigned devotion to the gods of the old religion, in spite of his earnest piety, which, it is evident, at times shaded into strange superstitious notions, Marcus had no definite views as to the "hereafter"; he never alludes to elaborate gradations of rewards and punishments, such as we find in the magic pages of Augustus' poet, the loved Virgil, but dwells rather on the idea of "rest in God" for the soul, which, as Marcus understood it, seems to have involved the loss of all personal identity.

The modern traveller—as he stands on the Palatine in the midst of the vast and melancholy ruins of the palaces of the Cæsars, and looks over the Roman Forum with its immemorial story, with its now shapeless piles of mighty stones, dominated by a few graceful columns, by a solitary arch or two, by a fragment here and there of a once mighty wall; as, painfully and wearily, he reconstructs in imagination the matchless group of sacred buildings once crowded together in that strange square or "place," for several centuries the centre of the world and its eventful story—begins to comprehend something of the feelings of a Marcus

Aurelius Antoninus, who gazed day by day on this wondrous scene, still in its fair beauty, at the height perhaps of its superb magnificence. Those stately temples, with their golden roofs gleaming and flashing beneath the rays of an Italian sun, were the chief earthly symbols of the deities whom he had been taught to revere, as the gods of the men who had been makers of the proud Empire over which he ruled, as the inspirers of their great deeds, as the Providence of their fortunes, as the Immortals who loved Rome with a peculiar love. These gorgeous fanes were the representative sanctuaries of such deities as Jupiter of the Capitol, Mars the Avenger, Vesta with her sacred fire, Venus, Juno, Saturn, or the "great Twin Brethren" who fought for Rome in her day of trial. All that was great and glorious in Rome had sprung—he had been taught—from the fact of the mighty protection of these venerated Immortals. The past, the present, the future of the Empire was bound up in their cult. Not only Italy, but the whole of the enormous Roman world in the East and in the West more or less acknowledged their sovereignty and adored their changeless majesty. Only one strange sect stood aloof from the cosmopolitan crowd of worshippers at these awful shrines, a sect comparatively speaking of yesterday — for when his great predecessor Augustus reigned it existed not—a sect which claimed for the Being it worshipped not toleration but solitary supremacy. It was verily an enormous, a stupendous claim, for it involved regarding the great gods of Rome as shadows, as mere phantoms of the imagination. Well might one like the Emperor Marcus shudder at a claim, at an assertion which would seem to a true patriot Roman, whose heart was all aflame with national pride, to involve the most daring impiety, the most shocking blasphemy, the most tremendous risks for the future of his people. And this sect of yesterday, his ministers would tell him, was steadily increasing not only in Rome, where curious strange faiths abounded, but in all the provinces, in the home-lands of Italy, in Greece, in Syria, far away even in the Euphrates valley, in Egypt the seat of mysteries, in

Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome.

THE FORUM.

View facing the Capitol.

North Africa with its wealthy sea-cities, in the vast province of prosperous Gaul. They would tell him how this hateful sect of Christians was adding daily converts to its extraordinary and dangerous belief, converts drawn from the humblest traders, from freedmen and slaves—converts drawn too from the noblest houses of Rome, even from the families of those patricians whose exalted rank gave them perpetual access to the sovereign's inner circle. The Christians, when Marcus followed his adoptive father Pius on the throne, from their great numbers, their unity, their organisation, had become a real power in the State, a power with which statesmen assuredly would have sooner or later to reckon, a power which threatened every day to grow more formidable.

And to the patriot Emperor, whose pious nature ever loved to dwell on the unseen protection of the Immortals, in whom he strove with intense earnestness to believe, to whom he prayed daily, hourly, these Christians and their aggressive uncompromising belief, for which, strangely enough, they were only too ready to die, were abhorrent. They constituted in his eyes an ever-present danger to Rome, her institutions, her ancient religion.

The Emperors he had followed on the throne, mighty sovereigns such as Vespasian and Trajan and Hadrian, noble princes, such as was his (adoptive) father Pius, had pronounced these Christians outlaws, had decided that the public confession of Christianity, without further investigation into the life of the accused, involved the punishment of death; but with the pronouncement, these Emperors had in some degree protected them from prosecution. In view of the present grave peril to the State, its most cherished institutions, and its ancient religion, the Imperial policy must be somewhat changed. The old rescripts of Trajan and his successors, which declared that the profession of Christianity incurred the penalty of death, might remain unaltered; but the Imperial mantle of protection which discouraged all persecution, hitherto spread over the communities of Christians, must be withdrawn. Henceforth the prosecution of Christians must not depend on

some chance event or information: these dangerous sectaries must be actively sought for, hunted down, and on conviction summarily dealt with.

The following dry historical records of contemporary writers referring to and briefly chronicling the persecutions of Christians specially active in the days of Marcus, will be the justification of a portion at least of the foregoing reflections on his anti-Christian policy.

Celsus, in his writing "The True Word," *circa* A.D. 177–180, or possibly a very few years earlier, but still in the same reign, speaks of Christians as being sought out for execution. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, *circa* A.D. 170–171, writes of new edicts which directed that Christians were to be pursued. For such persecution no precedent, he stated, existed. We have already expressed the opinion that no new edicts were promulgated by Marcus Antoninus, but that the old procedure was still carried on in the matter of Christian prosecutions, only with greater harshness and with an evident bias against the religion of Jesus. The "new decree" alluded to by Melito would, if this conclusion be accepted, signify fresh instructions or explanations from the Emperor rather than legislation. Athenagoras, *circa* A.D. 177–180, dwells on the harrying, robbery, and bitter persecution of the Christians. Following the argument of Justin Martyr, he inveighs against the Christian being condemned simply because of the "Name," no further evidence of guilt being required. Theophilus of Antioch, *circa* A.D. 180, also tells us that Christians were sought out and hunted down like dogs.

"The Acts of Martyrs" and records of martyrdom of the period, some absolutely genuine, others translations from the original *procès verbaux*, with little or no addition, speak to the same effect. In the "Acts of S. Felicitas and her Sons," the genuineness of which will be briefly discussed when we come to speak of some of the martyrdoms of the reign, the anti-Christian policy of Marcus is sadly evident. In the famous account of the "Martyrs of Lyons and Vienne" in Gaul we read how the Christians of the great Gallic

province were sought out. A similar inference must be drawn in the case of the martyrdom of Justin, related in the "Acta Justini."

It was this official hunting-down, this police seeking-out of Christians, which was the new feature in the policy of the Emperor Marcus towards the sect. It does not seem to have been ever practised in the reign of Antoninus Pius, and by Trajan and Hadrian it was explicitly forbidden, lest the rescripts should be misunderstood by over-zealous magistrates. The change introduced by Marcus Aurelius was complete and fundamental.

CHAPTER IX.

A CHAPTER OF MARTYRDOMS.

SECTION I.—INTRODUCTORY.

THE martyrdoms of the Christians of the age of persecution, an age which lasted roughly 260 to 280 years, form an important chapter in early Christian history if we bear in mind their terrible frequency, and remember how powerful an influence these conspicuous and repeated acts of suffering, even unto death, had upon the Christian life and character. It will be worth while to devote a short space in our history to a somewhat detailed relation (1) of a typical trial in the reign of Marcus Aurelius which preceded the last awful act; (2) of the scenes which took place in the prison where these captives for the religion were held in bondage and waited for the end; and (3) of the martyrdom in the public arena where these brave soldiers of the Faith in pain and agony passed to their rest.

The scenes we have chosen for our typical pictures lay in different famous centres of the Empire, in Rome, in Carthage, and in Lyons. The documents from which we have drawn the materials for our accounts are contemporary, and in the opinion of the great majority of serious critics absolutely authentic.*

(1) The trial scene we have selected for our example lay in Rome; it was conducted by an Imperial functionary of high rank, the Prefect of Rome, and the proceedings were read and approved by the Emperor Marcus himself, who after

* The only one of the three pieces of which the authenticity as a contemporary record is questioned is the *first*. The question of its authenticity is discussed below at some length.

reading them ratified the stern sentences of the prefect. The date of the trial in question was *circa* A.D. 162. The source of the document from which we quote was evidently the *procès verbal* of the trial.

(2) The prison scene we have depicted lay in Carthage the splendid and wealthy capital of the populous commercial province of North Africa. The date of this prison scene was *circa* A.D. 202. We have appended to this a very short account of the martyrdom which followed the scene in prison from the recital of an eye-witness, as it formed part of the original document describing the prison life.

(3) The other arena scene, chosen as a good example of the usual close of a martyrdom, lay in the flourishing province of Gaul, in the important city of Lyons. The date of the events here narrated was *circa* A.D. 177, during the reign of the Emperor Marcus. Again it is the record of eye-witnesses, who sent to certain Christian communities in distant Asia Minor a faithful record of what had been endured for the Gospel's sake by their brethren in the Faith in Lyons, then the chief city in the populous Gallic provinces of the West. The intimate relations of the Churches in Gaul with those in Asia Minor have already been noticed.

Thus, to sum up, the three typical scenes of Christian martyrdom are drawn from contemporary and authentic sources. They date from A.D. 162 for the trial scene, for the prison scene and its sequel from A.D. 202, for the arena scene from A.D. 177. The period of these three events, chosen as an example of what was taking place in many other cities, is roughly the middle of the 280 years of our story. Different great centres of the Empire have been selected. The trial was in Rome, the prison in Carthage, the arena in Lyons, thus illustrating the observation already made that the early scenes of persecution were common to all parts of the Roman Empire.

SECTION II.—A STATE TRIAL OF ACCUSED CHRISTIANS IN ROME.

EARLY in the reign of Marcus Aurelius modern scholars have placed one of the more famous scenes of martyrdom.

For various reasons the condemnation and passion of Felicitas and her sons have ever been a favourite and popular piece among martyrologists; these martyrs have been, out of numberless similar instances, selected as special objects of veneration. They occupied this position of high esteem in the Church's records certainly as far back as the middle of the fourth century, as we shall presently see.

Similar prosecutions were set on foot in numberless centres of the Empire at this period, A.D. 161–180; and as this trial of Felicitas and her sons, persons of high birth, took place at Rome, under the very eye of the Emperor, it will certainly serve as a fair example of the procedure. Our recital is based on the Latin text of the "Acts of S. Felicitas," which some critics* suppose to have been based on a Greek original report of the trial. There seems no reason for doubting, however, that the Latin text we possess fairly represents the original notes, or *procès verbal*,† of

* As, for instance, De Rossi, Marucchi, and Allard.

† Two unmistakable marks of the genuineness of the piece are—(1) It is undated save that the name of the magistrate or prefect is given; hence it would seem that the present version or redaction generally reproduced the original document, no attempt having been made to amplify or to render it more interesting or instructive. (2) The place or places of interment of these martyrs is not indicated in the "Acts." This is a mark of high antiquity, as in the early days great secrecy at first, for obvious reasons, was observed as to the place where the remains of any well-known confessor were laid. Accurate modern scholarship has, however, determined the date almost with certainty, and modern scientific research has, curiously, lighted upon some of the places of sepulchre of these martyrs.

A considerable amount of controversy has arisen on the question of the authenticity of these celebrated "Acts of S. Felicitas"—Aubé attacks them, and Renan accepts Aubé's view. Tillemont considers that they have not all the characteristics of genuine "Acts." Bishop Lightfoot, in a long note in his appendix to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Ep. of S. Polycarp (*Apostolic Fathers*), sums up against them, but does not consider it improbable that S. Felicitas was a real person, and that she may have had a son or sons who were martyred.

On the other hand, very many recent scholars maintain their authenticity—so De Rossi, Borghesi, Doulcet, Marucchi, and others. Allard, the most recent, accepts them (*Histoire des Persécutions*, vol. i., chap. vi.), and translates them at length with copious notes in his history as a valuable genuine piece, illustrated from De Rossi and others.

On the whole, the balance of evidence is strongly in favour of their general authenticity. It is possible that they have been redacted in a later age, but probably in the main they are absolutely a genuine piece. They are contained in the "Acta Sincera" of Ruinart.

what passed at the trial of the heroic mother and her sons.

Felicitas belonged, as we have said, to the higher ranks of the society of the day; she was a widow, famous in Christian circles for her earnest and devoted piety. The high rank and position which she occupied evidently gave her considerable influence. A deputation from among the Pagan pontiffs of Rome, well aware doubtless of the hostile feeling of the Emperor towards the Christian community, approached Marcus, and laid an information against Felicitas as belonging to the unlawful religion. They played upon the Emperor's well-known superstition, dwelling upon the wrath of the immortal gods stirred up by this woman's impiety towards them; a wrath which they professed to be unable to appease. The Sovereign, acting upon this information, directed the Prefect of the city to see that she and her sons at once publicly sacrificed to the offended gods. From the name of the Prefect, Publius, which is given in the "Acts," we are enabled to date the martyrdom *circa* A.D. 162. This year, we know, was spent by the Emperor Marcus in Rome.

The Prefect Publius summoned Felicitas, and endeavoured, first by gentle words, then by threats of a public execution, to induce her to sacrifice to the gods. Felicitas refused, telling the magistrate that she was conscious of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who would defend her from being overcome by the Evil One. "I am assured that while I live I shall be the victor in my contest with you, and if you cause me to be put to death I shall be still more a conqueror."

Publius then said: "Unhappy one, if it is pleasant for you to die, at least let your sons live."

"My sons," said Felicitas, "will surely live if they do not consent to sacrifice to idols. But if they commit this crime of sacrificing they will die eternally."

The day following the Prefect took his seat in the Forum, a place probably surrounding the Temple of Mars Ultor (The Avenger), and summoned her sons to appear as accused before him.

The first interrogation of Felicitas, due regard being had to her exalted rank, was held apparently in private. But now, as she had proved contumacious, her trial and that of her seven sons was conducted in the open Forum. "Be pitiful at least to your sons, these gallant young men, still in the flower of their youth," said the magistrate to the accused Christian lady. Felicitas, turning to her sons, bade them, "Look up to Heaven, where Christ with His saints is waiting for you, fight the good fight for your souls, and show yourselves faithful in the love of Christ." Then the Prefect Publius ordered his attendants to strike her, saying, "Do you dare in my presence to urge that the commands of our masters (the associated Emperors Marcus and Verus) shall be set at nought?" Then, commanding that her sons one by one should be placed before him, he addressed the eldest, Januarius, offering him a rich and coveted guerdon if he complied with the command and sacrificed, but threatening him with scourging with rods if he refused. Januarius simply answered, "The wisdom of the Lord will support me and enable me to endure all." He was at once scourged and led back to prison. The second, Felix, refused too, saying, "We adore one God, to whom we offer the sacrifice of prayers; never suppose that you will separate me or my brothers from the love of the Lord Jesus Christ; our faith will never be overcome or be changed by any of your threats." To the third son, Philip, Publius said, "Our lord the Emperor Antoninus commands that you should sacrifice to the all-mighty gods." Philip replied, "They are neither gods nor are they all-mighty. They are but vain, pitiful images, and those who shall consent to sacrifice to them will risk an eternal danger." To Silvanus, the fourth son, the Prefect spoke as follows: "I see you have agreed with your ill-starred mother to despise the commands of the Princes (Marcus Antoninus and his colleague Verus), and thus to bring about your ruin." "If," replied Silvanus, "we were to fear a temporary death, we should be punished with an eternal death, but as we know well what rewards are prepared for the just, what punishments are reserved for

sinners, we can safely despise the Roman law when it comes in conflict with the Divine law. If we treat these idols with scorn, and serve the All-mighty God, we shall win eternal life." To the fifth of Felicitas' sons, Alexander, the magistrate spoke as follows: "Think of your tender age, be pitiful to your life, still on its threshold, act as your sovereign Antoninus would have you act. Sacrifice to the gods and become the friend of the Augusti."* The brave youth at once answered, "I am the servant of Christ, I confess it openly, I love Him from my heart, I am ever adoring Him. Yes, I know I am young, but I have the wisdom of age so I adore our God. As for your gods, they and their worshippers alike will perish."

To the sixth son, Vitalis, the Prefect put the following question: "Perhaps you will choose to live, and will not prefer dying?" Vitalis in reply asked, "Who is it who really chooses to live? The one who adores the true God, or he who seeks the protection of a demon?" Publius then inquired, "What demon do you refer to?" Vitalis quietly answered, "All the gods of all nations are demons; so too are they who worship them."

Martial, the seventh and last of the accused, was thus apostrophised by the magistrate, "You are your own enemies, you despise the ordinances of the Augusti (Marcus and Verus), and you persist in your own destruction." "Oh," cried Martial, "if you only knew what punishments were reserved for those who worship idols! But God still restrains His anger from (crushing) you and your idol gods. All who do not confess that Christ is the true God will go into eternal fire."

The *procès-verbal* of the trial was forwarded to the Emperor Marcus for his decision. This was probably done because of the high rank of the accused, for as a rule

* This offer to the young Christian noble was a highly coveted distinction bestowed now and again on persons of rank. The "Amici Augusti" (friends of Augustus) possessed the right of access to the Imperial presence and a seat at his table. It was reckoned a great distinction, and we find it inscribed among the titles of honour on funeral tablets.

the magistrate summarily condemned to death persons who confessed that they were Christians.

The decision of the Emperor does not seem to have tarried. The accused were placed in the hands of the three officers whose duties consisted in the charge of the prisons and of the arrangements connected with capital punishments. (*Triumviri capitales.*)

Januarius was sentenced to be beaten to death by whips loaded with lead. The second and third brothers were doomed to a somewhat similar fate. The fourth was hurled from a height, and so died. The three remaining brothers and their mother, Felicitas, were decapitated. The punishment of Januarius and the second and third of his noble brothers was somewhat unusual in the case of illustrious Romans, but this last degradation in death no doubt was intended as a stern warning to like offenders belonging to the higher ranks of society.

The text of the "Acts" implies that the executions of the martyrs were not all carried out in the same place. It is probable that the places of their sepulture were chosen as near as possible to the scenes of the martyrdom. The State, as a rule, was merciful to the friends of the executed and usually gave up the bodies of those put to death to their friends for burial. But in the case of the unpopular Christians, the violence of the mobs, as we have seen in the case of Polycarp of Smyrna, sometimes destroyed these sacred relics; hence the silence in the "Acts" as to the place of interment. But the tradition of these sacred spots was faithfully kept in the Roman Church, and in the list of the "birthdays" (as the anniversaries of the day of their deaths were termed) of the more famous martyrs, which were kept solemnly in the first quarter of the fourth century, when Miltiades, A.D. 311–314, was Bishop of Rome, we find four of the well-known cemeteries (or catacombs) specified as the places of sepulture of Felicitas and her seven sons. This ancient reference is reproduced in the several lists of the catacombs containing tombs of famous martyrs usually visited by pilgrims between the fourth and seventh centuries.

Time, and the successive ravages by barbarian invaders and others to which the catacombs have been subjected, have removed all traces of the sepulture of six of the martyred sons. But a broken portion of the inscription SANCT FEL (icitas) has been unearthed in the spot designated by the ancient documents as the place of the mother's sepulture, leaving no doubt as to the perfect accuracy of the ancient tradition.*

But a far more striking discovery† by De Rossi in the ancient catacomb of Prætextatus on the Appian Way has shown us the tomb of Januarius scarcely changed, though more than seventeen hundred years have passed since the blood-stained remains of the eldest of the martyred seven were tenderly and reverently laid to rest.

The catacomb of Prætextatus, from many ancient references, was known to be rich in historic memories; and when part of it was being carefully excavated, and the heaps of earth and rubbish removed, a large and carefully decorated crypt or cubiculum was uncovered, the peculiar masonry and decorations of which experts referred to the times of the Antonines; scratched in the plaster of a fast fading fresco of the Good Shepherd on the wall was the following uncouth inscription containing these words and fragments of words:—

. . . MI REFRIGERI JANUARIUS AGATOPUS FELICISSIM . . . MARTYRES.
(MAY JANUARIUS, AGATOPUS, FELICISSIMUS THE MARTYRS REFRESH [THE SOUL OF] . . .)‡

Agatopus and Felicissimus were two martyrs, deacons of Pope Sixtus II., buried in the catacomb of Prætextatus A.D. 258. The friends of some dead Christian interred at a later period near the spot had scratched these words some two or three centuries after, invoking the protection of the three famous saints for their dear dead one.

The invocation implied that Januarius was buried in this cubiculum. The inference was shown eventually to be absolutely

* De Rossi, *Bull. di Arch. Christ.*, 1863, p. 21, 41–49.
† *Ibid.*, 1–4.
‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 4, and see also Allard, *Hist. des Pers.*, vol. i., chap. vi.

correct, for in A.D. 1863, as De Rossi was making further investigation on the spot, he found some fragments of marble on which, when put together, the following inscription could be deciphered. It was the work of Philocalus, the artist of Pope Damasus, A.D. 366–384, by whose reverent care so many of the precious martyr tombs of the second and third century were restored and marked:

BEATISSIMO MARTYRI
IANVARIO
DAMASVS EPISCOP
FECIT.

thus localising beyond doubt the site of the sepulchre where the remains of Januarius, the eldest of the martyred sons of Felicitas, were originally deposited.

SECTION III.—THE PRISON LIFE BEFORE A MARTYRDOM.

For our sketch of the prison scene in the case of an accused Christian, we have chosen perhaps the most beautiful and graphic of all the records which have come down to us of these martyrdoms: the one contained in what is known as the Passion of S. Perpetua.

The circumstances related in the "Passion" in question took place, *circa* A.D. 202-3, some forty years later than the martyrdom of Felicitas and her sons. The Emperor Severus was on the throne, a Sovereign ill-disposed to the religion of Jesus, in whose reign a long and bitter persecution of Christianity raged in most districts of the Empire. The scene of the martyrdom and of the events which preceded it was the great city of Carthage, the capital of the province of North Africa.

The "piece," the authenticity of which is supported by contemporary authorities, is generally received by scholars as a genuine* martyrology, largely the work of the heroine of the story.

The "Passion" in the form which we now possess is evidently

* See Appendix D.

written by three hands. By far the largest part is the prison memoir of Perpetua herself. A small section containing the relation of Saturus' vision in prison claims to have been written by Saturus* himself. It is woven into Perpetua's narrative. A short introduction by the redactor, or original editor, prefaces the memoir of Perpetua, and an account of the martyrdom closes the piece. This touching narrative of the final sufferings of the little company was written in compliance with Perpetua's request, made shortly before she suffered.

The immediate cause of the outbreak of persecuting fury at Carthage seems to have been one of those frequent popular disturbances in large cities excited by Pagan fanatics against the Christian community.

The little company who made up the actors in the bloody drama, the subject of the "Passion," consisted of Vivia Perpetua herself, a young married lady of good family and position, and Saturus; two slaves, Revocatus and Felicitas and two young men, Saturninus and Secundulus.

The arrest of this little group of Christians, apparently quite unconnected by any link or family bond with each other, was due to the accusation of a *delator*, or informer. They were hearers or pupils of Saturus, and the information was probably laid against them owing to a recent rescript of the Emperor Severus sternly forbidding any Christian propaganda. The accused at first were simply confined to their own dwellings. They had not, when first arrested received the rite of baptism. This, however, after the danger of their position was recognised by them, was no longer delayed. And Perpetua, we read, made a special request at her baptism for strength to endure suffering. The prayer was granted. The father of Perpetua, who was a Pagan, in vain entreated his daughter to apostatise. The accused were soon removed to one of the common gaols of Carthage, where they were herded together with other prisoners in close and dark cells.

* Saturus was a teacher of Carthage. He had been the instructor of Perpetua in the Christian faith, and suffered martyrdom at the same time as Perpetua and her companions.

It was the custom in Christian communities when an arrest was made of any of their number, at once to send deacons to the prison to comfort and assist the captives in the faith. Two deacons, Tertius and Pomponius, were appointed for this duty, and they paid the gaolers to allow the accused some relaxations from the stern prison treatment. Among other favours, Perpetua was allowed to have her child with her. She tells us in her narrative how the prison now became a pleasant abode. Her brother visited her too, and congratulated her on the privilege she enjoyed as a sufferer for the faith's sake, and suggested she should ask in prayer what would be the result of her captivity—would she be put to death or set at liberty? Perpetua prayed earnestly, and as an answer to her prayer she related to her brother how in the night as she slept a vision had been vouchsafed to her. She saw a great ladder, very steep, reaching up to Heaven, and on the sides of the ladder were swords and instruments of torture. A slip or a false step would at once expose anyone who should attempt to ascend the steep ladder rungs to being cut and maimed. At the foot of the ladder crouched a huge beast which she called a dragon.

Saturus, her teacher, climbed the ladder before her, and from the top he called to her: "I will support you, Perpetua; but beware of the dragon biting you." She answered: "He will do me no harm, in the name of Jesus Christ." She fearlessly put her foot on the beast's head and climbed up safely.

At the top she found a vast garden, and in the garden a white-haired shepherd milking his flocks; around him were gathered many thousands of white-robed forms. The shepherd looked up and spoke to her: "Thou hast well come, my child"; then he gave her a little piece of curd which she received and ate, and those who stood by said "Amen." She awoke with the taste of something in her mouth she could not explain, but it was very sweet. Perpetua knew she had seen her Lord, and that He meant her to understand that her "Passion" was determined upon, and that there was no prospect of release for her.

This and her subsequent visions in prison are the only supernatural incidents in the narrative, nor need we question their reality. Such dreams were by no means uncommon in these supreme moments of martyrdom. Cyprian, for instance, among others, relates what he saw in a vision when his martyrdom was near at hand. It is besides by no means inconceivable that these visions of comfort were vouchsafed now and again to the faithful witnesses in their bitter trials; and, indeed, what we deem purely natural causes might well produce such dreams in the sufferers, who in their waking moments had been dwelling on what they had heard or read of Heaven,* living in a feverish state of expectation of death, which they looked upon as the sure end of their trials and troubles and anguish, and at the same time as the gate of Heaven and eternal felicity.

There is no reason to doubt that Perpetua and Saturus, who also tells a strange dream which came to him as he waited for death, truly and faithfully relate their own experiences in the dreary Carthage prison.

The day of trial drew near. The father of Perpetua again came to see his daughter in her hard captivity, and entreated her as before to have compassion on his white hairs, remembering how in times past he had loved her best of all his children; he prayed her not to disgrace him now by dying a public death of shame, beseeching her to think of her mother, her brothers, her baby boy.

"I was very, very sorry for him," wrote Perpetua, "and I tried to comfort him by telling him God would decide the issue for us all, for we belonged not to ourselves but to Him; but my father left me alone, very sad."

The public trial soon came off. In the court the Procurator Hilarianus presided in the room of the pro-consul lately deceased. The Acts of the Passion are very brief here. They simply relate the advice of the judge to Perpetua to have pity on her grey-haired father and her baby boy, and to

* See Appendix D, where the impression left on their minds of such promises as are contained in the "Apocalypse of S. John" and in other writings, such as the "Shepherd of Hermas" is referred to.

sacrifice for the safety of the Emperor. Perpetua refused. Then the magistrate directly asked her whether she was a Christian.

"I am a Christian," replied the accused. Forthwith the little group was condemned to the wild beasts, and the condemned ones, all joyful, went back to their prison.

The last scene, however, was delayed. The victims were to be reserved for the public games in the Amphitheatre which were fixed for the anniversary of the Cæsar Geta, the Emperor Severus' son. The prison life went on much as before with the doomed companions; they prayed much together. One day as they were thus praying the name of Perpetua's little brother, Dinocrates, suddenly occurred to her. Dinocrates had been long dead. The child had been afflicted with a malignant cancer in the face, which had proved fatal. The sudden remembrance of her little brother seemed to Perpetua an intimation that she was accounted worthy to intercede for him; so she at once prayed long and earnestly to the Lord for the dead child. In the night she had another vision. We relate it in her own touching, simple language.

"I saw Dinocrates coming out of a dark place where there were many others. The child's face was sad, pale, scarred by the fatal cancer which had been the cause of his death. The death had been a sad one to witness.

"Between me and my brother lay a gulf (space) which was impossible to cross. Near Dinocrates there stood a piscina (or tank) full of water, but the rim of the tank was too high for a child to reach. Dinocrates was thirsty, and kept stretching up to it as though he wished to drink. I awoke, and understood at once that my brother was in suffering."

In the meanwhile the captives were removed into another prison, and the conditions of their imprisonment became harsher. Perpetua, however, kept on praying at all hours for Dinocrates. As she prayed (no doubt again while she was sleeping), once more she saw her little brother; but now the terrible cancer scar seemed quite healed; he appeared to have been tenderly cared for, and seemed quite happy; the piscina

she had noticed in her first vision was lowered, and out of a golden cup which never failed he drank as he pleased. "I saw him now playing quite happily as children play. Then I understood that he was released from punishment."*

As the day of the deadly combat in the Amphitheatre drew nearer and nearer, crowds of Christians visited the condemned in their prison, the guards on duty freely allowing these visitors to pass in and out. Amongst others, the father of Perpetua kept coming, hoping still to induce his dear daughter to recant.

Perpetua relates another vision before the end came; by no means an unnatural one considering the fate that lay before her, upon which she was continually brooding by night and by day. She dreamed that the day of the combat had at length arrived, and Pomponius, the Deacon, who had often visited her, had arrived to accompany her to the dread scene in the theatre. He was arrayed in a white robe. He took her to the place of combat and then left her, with the words, "Fear not, I am here with thee and suffer with thee." She describes vividly her fighting with a hideous Egyptian and his attendants; she tells how a great form shod with shoes of gold and silver, carrying a green bough on which were golden apples, stood by. She was the victor in the sore

* Scholars differ as to what the special guilt of the little boy could have been. The general opinion, however, is in accord, that he died *without baptism*. The whole vision is interesting, partly from it being an evidence as to the teaching at that early period of the importance of baptism, partly from the efficacy of prayer offered by the living for the dead. But it must be borne in mind, before any rash deductions are drawn from this authentic and early record, how singularly effective the prayers of those who were about to suffer martyrdom for the Faith were esteemed by the Church in those bitter days of persecution. It by no means follows that in the opinion of the early Church the prayers of persons living every-day lives would be equally efficacious. The case, too, of the little boy's sufferings is exceptional. If he were in a state of suffering owing to his having died yet unbaptised, as Perpetua evidently believed, it was no fault of the poor little fellow. That prayers, however, for the dead were offered by the early Church during the first three centuries is indisputable. Innumerable inscriptions on funeral tablets bear witness here, as also do prayers found in the oldest liturgies we possess. The blessing prayed for in the case of the departed is vague, however, and is best summed up in the beautiful and expressive word, "refrigerium"—refreshment (*refrigeria æterna*).

conflict; the form that stood by gave her the green bough, and she left the Amphitheatre with glory. "And I awoke," wrote Perpetua in her story, "and understood that it was not with beasts but against the devil that I was to fight. But I knew the victory was mine."

Woven into the beautiful tapestry of Perpetua's story is a short account written by Saturus, the Christian teacher, who was also condemned to the wild beasts, of a vision he saw when in prison with Perpetua and the others. The story of his vision is like the recital of the dreams we have been quoting from, simple, fervid, eloquent. It reads true, every line of it. It was a striking, even a wonderful experience, that of Saturus. We give a few extracts from his words. "We" (Saturus and Perpetua, his pupil) "had suffered and were no longer in the flesh. Four angels seemed to bear us up, but we were touched by no hands, we appeared to be gently ascending in an eastward direction, and before us lay a light incomprehensible. I said to Perpetua, who was at my side, 'This is what the Lord promised us. We have received the promise.' The four angels still bearing us, we found ourselves in a vast garden (viridarium) of roses, and of all manner of flowers. Four other angels were there yet more glorious than the first four, who greeted us with honour. We found there (in the garden) more martyrs known to us who had been burned lately in the course of the persecution, and we asked them questions, but the angels said, 'Come first and salute the Lord.'

"So we passed on and came to a place the very walls of which were, as it were, built of transparent light, and the angels who stood before the gate put white garments on us as we went in, and we heard the hymn, 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' being sung ceaselessly, and we saw One sitting all in white, with the face of a young man. Four elders were sitting on either side of Him, and behind were many other elders. All wondering with admiration we stood before the Throne; lifted up by the four angels, we kissed Him; when we had kissed the Lord the elders bade us go and play. (*Ite et ludite*—the Greek version has 'go and rejoice.') I said to Perpetua,

Now you have what you longed for.' She replied, 'I was glad when I was in the flesh, I am more glad now.'"

One of the group, the slave Felicitas, gave birth to a child when in prison. In her condition she would not have been allowed to have been exposed to the wild beasts, and the brave girl was sorely grieved at the possibility of being thus cut off from "witnessing to death" with her companions. So they all prayed with intense earnestness for her. Three days before the day fixed for the Amphitheatre rhow, the slave Felicitas, was delivered. One of the gaolers, as she suffered, heard her moaning, and said to her, "If you cannot bear these sufferings, how will you endure the rush of the wild beasts in the arena, you scorner of the gods?" "To-day," replied Felicitas, "I am enduring my own sufferings, but then there will be another within me (my Lord) who will suffer for me, because I shall suffer for Him."

They were no sombre group of gloomy fanatics, this Perpetua and her companions, ever with a smile on their lips, and a quiet half-humorous reproach for their guards when they behaved more harshly than usual. They had no dislike, no repugnance to the bright sunny life which possessed so fair a setting in that beautiful North African seaboard of the old historic Carthaginian land. In one of her striking prison visions, where the heaven-life plays so conspicuous a part, Perpetua told her companion in bliss, as he had been her companion in anguish, how happy she had been on earth, though she was then far happier in heaven. It was the intense reality of their faith which carried them all through their sufferings, which nerved them to meet the cruellest of deaths. It was no weariness of life which made them so glad to quit it. It was simply that they would not purchase life for an hour at the price of denying their Lord, who they *knew* would meet His brave confessors after the moment of the death agony, face to face. It was worth while to suffer for *that*.

It was the custom the evening before the Amphitheatre games for the condemned to be entertained somewhat liberally at the public expense. To this ghastly entertainment—

this death supper—many of the public were admitted as lookers-on. A crowd of Pagan sightseers assembled in the prison of Carthage where the Christians, who were to prove one of the principal sights in the bloody games of the morrow, were confined.

They thronged round the table where Perpetua and her friends were sitting. "Is not to-morrow long enough," remonstrated Saturus, "for you to feast your eyes upon those you hate? Smiling on us this evening as curious friends, to-morrow you will be our deadly enemies." He was alluding to the fierce thirst for the blood of the victims which usually possessed the spectators of those awful games. (The accuracy of Saturus's onlook here was sadly verified by the behaviour of the spectators in the Amphitheatre when Perpetua and the others were exposed to the beasts.) "Now mark well our countenances, that you may know them again at the Day of Judgment." The half playful, half earnest words of the Christian teacher who was to die on the day following deeply impressed many of the bystanders, some of whom eventually became converts to the Faith they had been taught to hate.

What happened on the "morrow" is related by another, a nameless Christian friend of Perpetua, who was specially asked by her to write down for the edification of others the story of the long looked-for death struggle with the wild beasts. It was "bound up," so to speak, in the little volume which contained the recital of Perpetua and the short bit by Saturus, the whole under the title of "The Passion of Perpetua." The same hand which wrote the little preface tells us the story of what happened in the Amphitheatre. He prefaces his supplementary recital with considerable solemnity. It is an admirable piece of composition, the work evidently of a trained scholar, but of a scholar, some think, belonging apparently to the Montanist school of Christian thought. This, however, is by no means proved. It has been seriously ascribed to Tertullian* himself.

* So Prof. J. Armitage Robinson, who maintains that the whole character of the composition points to Tertullian as its author; and considers it "in the highest degree probable that we have in the beautiful 'Martyrdom' a genuine addition to the hitherto recognised works of the great master."—*Texts and*

The day of their victory dawned at last, and the condemned procession marched from the prison to the theatre as though the march was to Heaven; cheerful, with beaming countenances, excited somewhat, but with feelings of joy rather than of fear: the two women following their companions, Perpetua serene, but with the gravity of a young matron, Felicitas pale and weak owing to her recent suffering. At the Amphitheatre gate the officials wished to vest the men with the dress of the priests of Saturn, and the women with the insignia of the priestesses of Ceres, as the terrible show would gain in dramatic picturesqueness if the chief actors in it were thus arrayed. But the victims earnestly remonstrated against the injustice of such a mockery.

Dying of their own free will because they would have no part in idolatry, they urged it was an illegal act to force them to put on vestments which belonged to rites they abhorred, and for the refusal to share in which they were about to die. The tribune in charge listened to them, and refrained from this last hateful insult.

Perpetua kept singing Psalms and spoke not a word. The men, when they passed before the seat of the Roman magistrate, thus apostrophised him, "You are our Judge; God will be yours." The people cried out that they should be scourged as a preliminary. This cruel request was complied with.

Then the wild beasts were loosed. Revocatus and Saturninus were attacked first by a leopard and eventually torn by a bear.* Saturus lived longest. The beasts at first refrained from tearing him; a wild boar which, it was hoped, would cruelly gore him, even turned furiously on his keeper instead of on the defenceless Christian; a bear, when his cage was opened, sulkily refused to come out. Saturus, for a brief moment thus respited, in the interval spoke to one Pudens,†

Studies: The Passion of S. Perpetua, pp. 47–56; Cambridge, 1891. Other modern writers, *e.g.* Mgr. Freppel and Allard, simply suggest that the nameless author of this part of the "Passion" belonged to the school of Tertullian.

* One of the little company of six, Secundulus, had died in prison.

† Allard believes this soldier to be identical with Pudens the martyr, who subsequently suffered as a Christian in one of the numerous persecutions of that period at Carthage.—*Hist. des Persécutions*, iii., chap. iii., p. 130.

a soldier on guard, who, moved by his words and conduct, had been kind and attentive to him in prison. "Be quick," said the fearless Christian, "and become a believer, for the leopard" (which was about to be loosed) "will soon kill me." Saturus was no doubt referring to conversations which had taken place in prison, and he longed to see the kindly soldier a Christian before his death agony. While speaking, the savage beast attacked him, giving him his death wound. Bathed in blood, but apparently heedless of pain, Saturus again spoke to Pudens. "Farewell," said the dying soldier of Christ to the soldier of the Emperor; "remember me." And he asked Pudens for his ring. Pudens gave it; Saturus dipped it in the life-blood streaming from him, and returned it. The martyr then fainted, and was dragged away into the spoliarium outside the arena where the victims, if not dead, were usually despatched.

We will turn to Perpetua and her companion, Felicitas. It had been decided to expose them in a net to be tossed and gored by an infuriated cow. The crowd, touched with a momentary feeling of compassion, cried out that these sufferers need not be stripped of their garments, which was the usual practice. Perpetua was attacked first, and tossed in the air. She fell to the ground and in her heavy fall her light garments were all torn, and her hair fell about her shoulders. The sufferer's first thought was to adjust her torn tunic and to fasten up her flowing hair; then, although sorely hurt, she turned to Felicitas, her "sister" in suffering, who, too, had been tossed, and raised her up. Again the crowd was touched with pity, and unwilling to look any longer upon the torments endured by the two brave women, insisted on their being removed from the arena. In the outer court of the Amphitheatre Perpetua found a young Christian named Rusticus, who had followed her to the games. The martyr was dazed with pain and the fearful shock she had experienced, and asked when she was to be exposed to the beasts. She had lost all remembrance of what had happened to her, but in a minute she saw her wounds, and the blood streaming, and her torn dress, and the horror of her situation all came back to

THE MARTYRDOM OF S. PERPETUA.

From an Engraving by G. B. Cavalerri in a volume, "Ecclesiæ Militantis Triumphi," 1583.

her; yet she said to Rusticus, "Be strong in the Faith; love one another." But the pity of the spectators was short lived. Even while she was speaking her stammering words of faith and love, they shrieked again for the condemned wounded ones to be brought back into the arena; after all they would see them die!

Once more the victims were brought back, and in the sight of the crowd thirsting for their blood, the officials, whose duty it was to despatch those criminals who had not been killed outright by the beasts, proceeded to complete the ghastly work. Silent, motionless, they waited and received the stroke of the executioner's sword. Saturus died first. A young gladiator who was told off to kill Perpetua, trembled at his horrible task, and missed his stroke, and only wounded her in the side; she cried out, but in a moment, recovering herself, guided the hand of her slayer and pressed the point of the sword on her throat, and so died.

"It would seem," says the pitying narrator of the scene, "that such a woman could scarcely perish save by the exercise of her own will and consent."

The writer of the little account, which evidently was the work of an eye-witness, with its harrowing details, with nothing of the supernatural introduced, a simple plain record, well written, lucid and brief, here breaks into a noble peroration only a few lines long, beginning thus, "O strong and blessed martyrs; O truly called and chosen into the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If the great Tertullian, who lived and wrote at Carthage in the first years of the third century, was not the author of the little introduction and of the recital of the last scene of the martyrdom epitomised above, he was at least intimately acquainted with the story; and in his celebrated treatise "De Patientia" draws the portrait of a "girl martyr," seemingly from the life. "Was he not thinking of her whose one prayer at her baptism had been at the Spirit's bidding for this very brave patience? Had he not in view the scene in the Amphitheatre when the martyrs shake their heads at the Judge whom God will judge, and the noble picture of Perpetua

herself, the bride of Christ, the darling of God, with her bright step and flashing eye, soon to find herself enjoying in the spirit the beatific vision before the time, and only recalled to earth to taste of pain, and to point the clumsy sword of the executioner to her own throat?"*

SECTION IV.—MARTYRS OF LYONS AND VIENNE, *CIRCA* A.D. 177.

We have already observed that there exists no arranged and carefully composed history of the early progress of Christianity. In the Acts of the Apostles, and in most of the Epistles of the New Testament, are scattered notices of the rapid spread of the new Faith. From the scanty reliques of the writings of some of the chief teachers of the Gospel we catch glimpses, more or less extensive, of the progress of the religion in different great centres, especially in Rome and Jerusalem, in Ephesus and Smyrna, and in the Syrian Antioch; but for the first century and a half after the Passion and Ascension of the Lord, save in Rome, Jerusalem, and Antioch, and some of the great sea-board cities of Asia Minor, we know little of the story of the propagation of the Faith. That its missionaries, however, were full of zeal, and that their early work was often wonderfully successful in other lands and centres, we learn from various isolated records of events which have come down to us—some of these records often bearing the date of the last quarter of the second century.

Of these isolated records, one of the most interesting and important reaches us from the province of Gaul. It is a letter addressed, to use the words of the writer, "by the servants of Christ dwelling at Lyons and Vienne in Gaul to those brethren in Asia and Phrygia having the same faith and hope with us." The letter is of unquestioned authenticity,†

* *Texts and Studies: The Passion of S. Perpetua.* By Prof. J. Armitage Robinson, Cambridge, 1891, p. 58.

† The text of most of the original letter is contained in Eusebius (*H. E.*, v. i., 2, 3), and is also in Rufinus' Latin version of Eusebius' *History*. It is also afterwards referred to in the writings of Gregory of Tours, by Ado, by Bede, etc.

and is of very considerable length. It relates the history of a terrible crisis through which the Churches in that populous district had just passed, and out of which, notwithstanding the awful trial to which a large group of some of their prominent members had been subjected, they had emerged unconquered and victorious.

The letter was written shortly after A.D. 177, when the Emperor Marcus was reigning. Up to this time there is absolutely no record of Christianity in Gaul, no sign even that the news of the religion of Jesus had crossed the Alps into the great Gallic provinces; but this epistle lifts the veil and breaks the silence which had hitherto rested over the Church of the provinces of Southern Gaul, and from the details contained in the communication we find that a large and flourishing community must have for many years before A.D. 177 existed in these parts. In other words, we have here in this contemporary record the earliest extant notice of Christianity in Gaul, and the record in question bears indeed a striking testimony to the vitality and to the careful organisation of the Churches in this province.

Lyons, the scene of the persecution spoken of in the letter, was perhaps the most important of the provincial cities of the Western Roman Empire. Its commanding situation at the junction of the rivers Saône and Rhone designated it as a great commercial emporium, and at the time when Marcus was Emperor it was the civil and religious metropolis of the many cities of the three Gallic provinces. In common with other famous provincial centres, it was enthusiastically devoted to the worship of "Rome and Augustus,"* recognising its connection with Rome and the Empire as the source of its grandeur, its prosperity and security.

Alongside of the Pagan population of Lyons, Vienne, and other south Gallic cities, had grown up, probably during the last half of the second century, flourishing communities belonging to the new Faith. We can in the light of the letter

* See the remarks on this devotion of provincial cities to the worship of "Rome and Augustus" in Chapter VII., § 3.

easily discern whence came the beginnings of these Christian communities. Between Southern Gaul and the sea-board of Syria and Asia Minor existed close and frequent communication. The commercial relations were intimate, and there was a constant passing to and fro from cities like Ephesus and Smyrna to the chief commercial emporium of Gaul, Lyons. Thither in the second century the story of the Gospel was brought from Asia Minor. The fact of the Gallic Christians now addressing their brethren in Asia Minor shows how close were the ties which connected the Gallic and Asiatic Churches. The Greek names, too, of many of the principal heroes of the story point to the same conclusion.

Among these heroes, Pothinus, the aged Bishop of Lyons, was conspicuous. Pothinus was more than ninety years old when he suffered. Tradition speaks of him as a native of Asia Minor; of two of the sufferers, it is incidentally stated that one was from Pergamos, the other a Phrygian, while nearly all of them bear Greek names. The most prominent figure in the Church of Lyons and Southern Gaul, who, immediately after the events related in the letter, appears as perhaps the most distinguished personality in the Catholic Church, was Irenæus, who succeeded the aged martyr Pothinus as Bishop of Lyons. Irenæus had been a disciple of Polycarp, and in our sketch of the life of the great Bishop of Smyrna we have already quoted some of his reminiscences of his revered master. Possibly owing to his absence from Lyons at this juncture, Irenæus, in spite of his influential position among the Christians of the province, was not one of the accused whose story the letter contains. This letter we will briefly summarise.

In the case of the persecution of Lyons, the exciting cause was angry popular clamour, so common in the earlier years of the growth of the Faith. A great festal gathering was arranged in the August of A.D. 177 at Lyons, the civil and religious metropolis of Gaul. It was partly commercial; a large fair was being held to which traders came from a distance; an imposing religious ceremony of which the Temple of "Rome and Augustus" was the central shrine, was part

of the festival; and public games in the Amphitheatre, as usual of a bloody and cruel nature, were to be celebrated for the populace, ever greedy of such amusements. The cry of "Death to the Christians!" was generally heard. The populace insisted on a number of prominent and well-known Christians being arrested; well aware were these turbulent and factious rioters of the doom which would almost certainly follow such arrests.

By no means willingly, it would seem, did the Imperial magistrates of Lyons yield to these popular clamours. As a rule, the mob pressed for victims to be selected out of the hated sect, the magistrates being generally reluctant to satisfy them. Their reluctance seems to have proceeded from no love for Christianity, but was simply based on reasons of policy. Their statesmanlike instincts told them that these persecutions were, on the whole, dangerous to the established state of things in the Empire, and rather advanced than retarded the progress of the dangerous and proscribed sect. If the accused Christians apostatised and publicly sacrificed to the genius of "Augustus and Rome," or to any other of the prominent gods of Rome, it was well. Thus a blow was undoubtedly struck at Christianity; it helped to discredit the dangerously advancing religion. But if, on the other hand, the Christians stood firm, and resisted alike blandishments and threats, as was by far the more common result, then the tortures and the horrible scenes which followed enormously helped the Christian cause. The martyr's death was not only a victory for the poor brave sufferer; but was a public demonstration of the earnestness and steadfastness, of the intense silent faith, which lived among these stubborn adversaries of Paganism and of Imperial idolatry.

The beginning of the Lyons persecution was unfavourable for the accused. Ten of the arrested were terror-stricken at what lay before them and consented to abjure their faith. A fresh departure was made in this persecution; a number of slaves belonging to Christian families were threatened with torture, and, thus terrorised, charged the Christians with all manner of nameless crimes; the rage of the populace was

still further inflamed by these accusations, none of which, however, appeared to have been pressed, the baselessness of such charges being too well known. Nothing, however, was omitted in this wild tempest of persecution which might induce recantation; but with the exception of the ten above mentioned, no torments, no threats, seemed to have moved any of the accused. They were scourged and exposed to wild beasts. Lions and tigers were not easily procured, and the cost of importing them would have been too great for a provincial city, even of the importance of the capital of South Gaul. But bulls and dogs and wild boars were used to gore and injure the sufferers. This accounts for the appearance on more than one occasion of several of the Lyons martyrs in the Amphitheatre in the course of these games. They were hurt and torn and bruised, but not killed. If possible, the tortures they endured were even greater than those of exposure to the deadly rush of a lion or a leopard

An apparently favourite and horrible device we read of in this recital; a red-hot chair was introduced and the accused made to sit on it, the fumes of the roasted flesh giving fresh pleasure to the jaded passions of the cruel spectators.

The heroism of the Lyons martyrs was not peculiar to rank or degree, or sex or age. The same splendid faith lived in them all alike. Among their numbers were men of good position and fortune, Deacons of the Church, the saintly aged Bishop, the boy Ponticus, only fifteen years old, the poor young slave girl, Blandina. This last, by her almost superhuman endurance of long and protracted agonies, spread over several days, has acquired a peculiar place of eminence even among the tens of thousands who, in many lands, willingly and joyfully gave up their lives rather than deny their Master. The letter, with a charming frankness, tells us how the Christian mistress of Blandina feared for her little slave girl; her frail body, she thought, never could endure severe pain and mortal suffering, and in consequence she would be moved to recant. But Blandina's mistress miscalculated what strength the love of Christ would infuse into the delicate child-frame; scourged, burnt, torn, Blandina uttered no complaint or moan,

only repeating again and again, "I am a Christian." The savage servants of the arena, accustomed to these scenes of blood and torture, confessed themselves astonished at the girl's endurance of various punishments, any one of which, they thought, would have sufficed to kill her. In the end she was tossed by a bull several times, till all consciousness of suffering was lost, and the pure heroic spirit of the child-martyr had probably left the lacerated body before the sword of the executioner completed the work of the bull.

But the noble example was never forgotten. It was the after effect of such scenes as these that the wiser and more thoughtful of the Roman magistrates dreaded, when they hesitated before sanctioning a general and public persecution.

Indeed, in the course of the Lyons trials the Imperial magistrate sent a despatch to the Emperor Marcus for special instructions; since some of the accused, as we have seen, recanted, while others claimed the privilege of Roman citizenship, which would protect them from public exposure in the arena. The answer came at once. The Roman citizens, if they persisted, were to be simply decapitated, while those who recanted were to be at once set at liberty. The others, if they still refused to sacrifice, were to be exposed to the horrors of the arena.

But as regards those who recanted, the tardy Imperial mercy which ordered their immediate liberation came too late. In prison, the little group who, overcome with fear, had not been faithful unto death, had fallen under the influence of the brave confessors; the conduct of these steadfast ones in prison matched well with their behaviour in court. They even refused the title of confessors in their beautiful humility, deeming themselves unworthy of the high title of honour. In the striking words of the letter of the Church of Lyons, "They pleaded for all, they accused none, they absolved all, they bound none, they prayed for their bitter foes, . . . they arrogated no superiority over the poor backsliders." The result of their conduct and loving advice was that scarcely one among those who had recanted was found who would accept the Emperor's clemency; they well-nigh all preferred rather to die with their brave companions.

In the long extract of this letter preserved in Eusebius (*H. E.*, v. i., 2, 3, 4), only a very few names of the martyrs of Lyons are given, just those who were especially prominent in the tragedy. "Why," asks the historian, "should we here transcribe the list of those martyrs? Their names," he adds, "may be learned if the epistle be consulted." They are, however, given by martyrologists * who wrote later, and no doubt copied them from the original document which was still extant. The numbers appear to have been about forty-eight. The fury of the people, however, was not satiated by the death of the noble victims. Their remains were savagely burned by the mob and the ashes cast into the Rhone. Men thought that by this destruction of the poor remains the hope of the resurrection of the body, which had buoyed up these obstinate Christians and had enabled them to meet death even with joy, would be shown to be mere folly.

The persecution raged on with especial fury in Gaul for many years, but the Acts of Martyrdom telling the story of the fate of many other confessors are not, like the letter we have been using, contemporaneous. General tradition, however, the authenticity of which we see no reason to doubt, places the death of the eminent confessors, whose memory is still enshrined in many of the great churches of this part of France, in the later years of the Emperor Marcus; such as S. Benignus of Dijon, S. Valentine of Tournus, S. Marcel of Chalons, S. Felix of Sauliers, S. Symphorian of Autun.

SECTION V.—ROME IN THE LATTER YEARS OF MARCUS.

After the long extracts from the letter relating the sufferings of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne in Gaul, Eusebius (*H. E.*, v. ii.) wrote as follows: "Such were the occurrences that befell the Churches of Christ under the above-mentioned Emperor (Marcus), from which it is easy to conjecture what was the probable course of things in the remaining provinces." Now we have already given a typical instance of the condition of things with the Christians at Rome at the

* The "Martyrology" of Jerome, Gregory of Tours, and Ado.

beginning of Marcus' reign, *circa* A.D. 162, in the picture drawn from the Acts of the trial and martyrdom of S. Felicitas and her sons. We will dwell for a brief space on the position of Christians in the metropolis of the Roman world some seventeen years later, when the reign of Marcus, the noblest of the Pagan Emperors, was drawing to an end, *circa* A.D. 177–9.

Our picture here is based upon "The Acts of S. Cecilia," a document in its present form not older than the fifth century, containing many manifest inaccuracies. These "Acts" have generally been looked upon by critics as largely mythical and not belonging to serious history. Late investigations, however, and especially the discoveries of De Rossi in the cemetery of S. Callistus, in a strange way confirm in substance the accuracy of the recital in these "Acts," and we can now with some confidence restore the "Acts of S. Cecilia" to their primitive form. They give us a vivid picture of the condition of Christians of the higher ranks of Rome in the last years of Marcus.

The original story which formed the basis of the "Acts" was as follows: Cecilia, a girl of the highest rank, was married to a young patrician, Valerian, who, with his brother, Tiburtius, through her influence became devoted Christians. The State policy at this period of persecution threw every obstacle in the way of separate interment for members of the Christian sect who had suffered martyrdom. It was the passionate wish of Christians, as we know from the evidence of the Catacombs, to preserve intact and separate from the heathen dead the remains of their loved friends; the bodies of martyrs for the Faith being peculiarly precious in their eyes.

The brothers Tiburtius and Valerian seem to have been especially zealous in arranging for such interments. It was a well-known loving work of charity among the wealthier members of the Christian community to provide sepulchres for their poorer brethren. Not a few of the more ancient crypts or catacombs were in the first instance excavated beneath the gardens of the villas of rich Christians. Busied in this pious work, they were denounced by informers, were arrested,

and on their refusal to sacrifice to the gods were condemned and beheaded; and along with them an Imperial officer, Maximus, who was converted by the noble brothers.

Cecilia caused the three martyrs to be interred in a crypt belonging to her family in the cemetery or catacomb of Prætextatus on the Appian Way. Cecilia herself was next denounced and arrested, tried and condemned. The magistrate, out of consideration for her exalted rank, condemned her to die in her own house in the Trastevere* district of the city. We have many instances under the Emperors of the punishment of death in the case of persons of fortune and of high birth being carried out in the houses of the condemned. These were, of course, mostly political offenders. The sentence was that she should be shut up in the caldarium, or room of the warm bath of the house, and that the pipes should be heated to such a degree as to cause suffocation.

But after the expiration of a day and night Cecilia was found still alive. It needs no special miracle to explain this, means of ventilation in the caldarium having been no doubt arranged by her friends. A lictor was then appointed to carry out the capital sentence by striking off her head.

This work seems to have been inefficiently performed, and for two days she survived the wounds inflicted by the executioner, and was even able to speak words of encouragement and consolation to her friends. To the bishop of the Roman community, Urban, she is said to have made a present of her house as a church. It has been a church ever since, and is now the well-known basilica of S. Cecilia. Placed in a coffin of cypress wood, in the attitude in which she expired, she was laid in one of the chambers of her own cemetery on the Appian Way.

As we have observed, there are various inaccuracies in the "Acts," due to the fifth century revision; but in the main the recital is evidently historical. For instance,

* This is the well-known name for that portion of Rome situated on the right bank of the Tiber, the old city being built on the left bank. So on the "Trastevere" side was the *Vatican* suburb.

THE MARTYRDOM OF S. CECILIA.

From the Engraving by Marc Antonio, after Raphael's painting in the Bologna Gallery.

Photo: Alinari & Cook, Rome.

MADERNA'S EFFIGY OF S. CECILIA.

In the Trastevere Basilica of S. Cecilia.

Urban,* the Bishop of Rome, is stated to have buried the noble martyrs in a chamber near his own colleagues the bishops. This is only partly true. De Rossi has indeed found the grave of S. Cecilia in a sepulchral chamber only separated by a slender wall from the famous "Papal Crypt" where the bishops of Rome of the third century were buried. But Cecilia was laid there *before* the Popes of the third century, in the sepulchral area belonging to her noble house, which area was shortly afterwards made over to the Church, and many of the bishops of Rome were subsequently buried in it.

In the removal of a vast number of Christian remains from the catacombs to the Roman Churches, *circa* A.D. 822, Pope Paschal translated the body of S. Cecilia to her church in the Trastevere district which occupied the site of her house. In the tradition † preserved, the martyr's body, wrapped in the original robe, embroidered with gold, and still lying in the same posture, was reverently placed with her cypress wood coffin in a white marble sarcophagus beneath the altar of the church. In the year 1599 Cardinal Sfondrati, in the course of a restoration of the building, found two marble sarcophagi beneath the altar. In the presence of Cardinal Baronius, the well-known scholar, the expert Bosio, and others, an examination of the contents of these sarcophagi was made. In one of them the body of S. Cecilia was found, still in the same traditional attitude. The sculptor Maderna, who was one of the eye-witnesses when the sarcophagus was opened, has reproduced in marble the figure of Cecilia as he says he saw her lying there. The present altar now stands over the tomb, and the beautiful statue of Maderna is beneath it.‡

* The date of Urban's episcopate was A.D. 223. There appears, however, to have been another Urban, a bishop of some place unknown, who was connected with S. Cecilia and her family. This Urban was buried in the cemetery of Prætextatus.

† It is Pope Paschal who tells the story, as well as his contemporary biographer, the continuator of the *Liber Pontificalis*, Ed. Duchesne, tom. ii., p. 56. Allard, *Hist. des Persécutions*, vol. i., vii., 2, and see Northcote, *Roma Sotterranea*, chap. iv.

‡ The preservation of the body of Cecilia is not by any means a solitary example of what seems to be a strange phenomenon. But is it not probable that a skilful embalming took place after Cecilia's death? Her exalted rank and great wealth, and her high reputation among the Roman Christians, would at

In the other sarcophagus the remains of three bodies were found by Cardinal Sfondrati. Two of these had manifestly been beheaded, whilst the skull of the third was broken, and the abundant hair upon it had been evidently thickly matted with blood. It was as though the sufferer had been beaten to death by the leaden scourges, not infrequently used as instruments of capital punishment; tradition, preserved in the *Liber Pontificalis*, tells us that the three bodies of the martyrs, Valerian Cecilia's husband, Tiburtius his brother, and Maximus the Roman officer, had been translated from the Catacomb of S. Prætextatus to the church of S. Cecilia, by Pope Paschal.

The plain unvarnished account of the discovery of the first resting-place of S. Cecilia by De Rossi, who spent long years in his great work of investigating certain of the catacombs, is, of course, too long for insertion. We will give, however, a summary of it. Guided in his search by careful study of the ancient Pilgrims' Itineraries, by notices in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and other documents, he came upon the original place of sepulchre of the famous martyr. His description is most exhaustive. He has traced the signs still existing in that sacred crypt, of the veneration of pilgrims stretching over several centuries. All these pieces of evidence —De Rossi's discovery of the place of the original interment; the account of Pope Paschal's work in connection with the translation of S. Cecilia's body in the early years of the ninth century; the singular confirmation of the details of the work of Paschal by the re-discovery of the two sarcophagi, in the Basilica of Cecilia in the year 1599, by Cardinal Sfondrati—have justified us in citing the "Acts of S. Cecilia," the chief features of which, accurate in all material points, are now fairly established.

From these "Acts" thus supported, we have drawn a picture* of a group of martyrdoms to illustrate the condition of

all events seem to suggest this. The recital of the finding of the body when Pope Paschal translated the remains in the ninth century has all the appearance of being a true narrative, and the accuracy of the story of the opening of the sarcophagus by Sfondrati, eight centuries later, in the presence of such men as Baronius, Bosio, and Maderna, can scarcely be questioned.

* "We have already acknowledged that the 'Acts of S. Cecilia,' as we now possess them, are not genuine, and yet we have seen that in substance their accuracy has been marvellously confirmed by all that has since been discovered.

Photo: Anderson, Rome.

THE ORIGINAL TOMB OF S. CECILIA.

In a Sepulchral Chamber in the Cemetery of S. Callistus. It dates from the Second Century, being older than the "Papal" Crypt, which it adjoins.

Christians of the highest rank at Rome in the latter years of the reign of the Emperor Marcus.

The death of S. Cecilia and her friends closes, as far as any public records guide us, the tale of deaths for the Faith during the days of Marcus, in the Imperial City. There is little doubt that the examples we have given of these persecutions at the beginning and end of the reign only too faithfully represent the conditions under which Christians lived at Rome all through the reign of the noblest of the Pagan Emperors; the sword ever suspended above their heads, and frequently falling, now on representatives of the patrician order, like Felicitas and her sons, and Cecilia with her husband and his brother, now on the trader, the freedman and the slave, whose names are unwritten save in the Book of God's record of His own.

The number of martyrs at Rome in the various seasons of persecutions was very great. In a corner of the Papal Crypt, for instance, adjoining the burial chamber of Cecilia, there is a pit of extraordinary depth, where a tradition, preserved in one of the ancient itineraries, speaks of 800 bodies of these martyrs being buried together. If this tradition be a true one, it refers probably to a fierce onslaught on the Christian community in the reign of Marcus; for the Papal Crypt only a few years later became a burying place of extraordinary sanctity, mainly reserved for the bishops of Rome, and was not used any longer for ordinary interments.

The truth is that the monuments discovered in the Catacombs and in the Trastevere Church almost enable us to restore the 'Acts' to their primitive form. The 'Acts' of S. Cecilia, as they have come down to us, cannot lay claim to any higher antiquity than the fifth century, but recent discoveries have proved that they are unquestionably true in all the chief features and in many even of their minutest details." Dr. Northcote, chap. iv., in his account of Investigations of De Rossi; see, too, De Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, ii., p. 145–6, 160–244, etc.; Baronius, *Ann. Eccle.*, *ad. ann.*, 821, 12, 19; Bosio, *Hist. Passionis S. Ceciliae*, p. 155–170.

"Le récit des Actes (de S. Cécile) contestable pour tout ce qui relève de l'imagination ou de la science historique du narrateur, mais exact dans les circonstances matérielles, qu'avaient transmises à l'écrivain du cinquième siècle une tradition précise ou des documents écrits, ne pouvait recevoir une plus éclatante confirmation." . . . . "Rarement un document de cette nature a subi une épreuve plus concluante, et en est sorti mieux justifié." Allard, *Histoire des Persécutions*, vol. i., chap. vii., 2.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER THE ANTONINES.

SECTION I.—CHRISTIANITY AT THE CLOSE OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

It was probably in the first or second year following the martyrdom of S. Cecilia that the great Emperor Marcus died. He was followed by his unworthy son, Commodus, who inherited none of his father's noble qualities. Indeed, he has been not unjustly styled a gladiator rather than an emperor. His historian tells us how he publicly engaged in these inglorious combats more than seven hundred times.* Yet, strange to say, the general persecution of Christianity, which raged, well-nigh all through the nineteen years of Marcus' reign, although by no means ended, was much less severe and was less general in the evil days of Commodus.

Indeed, Commodus had no fixed policy. With Marcus the existence of the Christians constituted a real danger to the prosperity of the Empire; they were strangers to the spirit of Rome and her gods; not traitors—no one could accuse the Christians of treason to the Emperor and his government—but standing aloof; having no share in the ancient traditions upon which Marcus and those who thought with him believed that the greatness of Rome was founded, and on the maintenance of which, her future grandeur, nay, her very existence as a world-empire, depended. Therefore, the

* Commodus, in his singular and degraded passion for the Amphitheatre, was a strong contrast to his father Marcus, who loathed these bloody and corrupting spectacles and made various but fruitless efforts to do away with them. But the fashion was too deeply rooted, and not even the all-powerful will of the Emperor could put an end to them.

philosopher Emperor allowed, even enforced, their persecution on principle.

His son Commodus, however, cared little or nothing for the ancient Roman traditions. So, in his time, the persecution was intermittent; depending a good deal on the temper and views of the powerful Imperial lieutenants who ruled in the name of Rome in the provinces. There was, too, at the headquarters of the Government a powerful influence at work favourable to the religion of Jesus. Many of the courtiers and office-bearers about the court were Christians; and Marcia who, though never bearing the title of Empress, was, to all intents and purposes, the wife of Commodus, and who possessed vast influence with the Emperor, was a firm friend of Christianity; possibly, as some believe, herself a Christian.

All this, especially as time went on, helped the hated and dreaded sect; and so the position of Christians in the reign of this weak and vacillating Emperor gradually became far less precarious than it had been under the rule of Marcus.

In his earlier years, however, before the palace influences, and especially the persuasions of Marcia, had been able to arrest the bitter persecuting spirit which had for so many years prevailed, we hear of these bloody attacks still harassing Christian communities, notably in North Africa.

In that great and wealthy province, the religion of Jesus had evidently grown up, as it had done in Gaul, with marvellous rapidity; striking its roots among the population far and wide. We have absolutely no records which tell us of its first beginnings, no story of the laying of the foundation of the Faith; only at the close of the second century, when Commodus and his immediate successors were reigning, we find a large and flourishing Church established in Carthage and the country districts, a Church already elaborately organised. The first mention we come upon of this North African Church is an account of a persecution to which it was subjected in the first days of the reign of Commodus.

This onslaught took place at Madaura. We have no details; only a few of the martyrs' names are preserved to us, and those not Latin, but evidently belonging to men of

the Punic race. Only a few days after—according to later investigations, in the August of the same year, A.D. 180—a cruel persecution brought the Roman colony of Scillium, in North Africa, into some prominence. The more distinguished Christians were brought to Carthage, were there formally charged with professing the proscribed religion, and were condemned and put to death, solely because they persisted in refusing to swear by the genius of the Emperor. The Proconsul Saturninus, following the policy pursued by so many of the more statesmanlike among the higher magistrates of the Empire, endeavoured to procure from them something of a recantation; and offered the group of Christian Scillitans a period of delay, thirty days, to consider if they would not make up their minds to preserve their lives by the apparently easy process of swearing by the genius of the Emperor. They were, however, steadfast, and in consequence suffered capital punishment. On being summoned to swear by the genius of the Emperor, Speratus replied, "I do not acknowledge the sovereignty of this world; I serve God, whom no man hath seen, or can see with these eyes."

In the course of the official examination Speratus, being asked what things (*res*) were preserved in their chest (*capsa*), answered, "The books and the letters of Paul the just man." The books were doubtless the Gospels, the well-known Christian books. The "Acts" end with the words: "Thus all were crowned with martyrdom, and are reigning with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, through all the ages of ages." The "Acts" of the Scillitan martyrs* from which these extracts are made, are looked upon as an unmistakably genuine piece, dating from about the year 180. The names of the martyrs are given. There were twelve in all. The words of one of them—Nartzalus—when he heard his sentence, are worth recording: "Hodie martyres in coelo sumus; Deo gratias."

* Allard hus twrites of this document: "Des 'Actes' comptés à bon droit parmi les monuments les plus anciens, et les plus purs de l'antiquité Chrétienne."—*Hist. des Persécutions*, vol. i., p. 446. Compare also *Texts and Studies* in the Appendix on the Scillitan martyrdom (*Passion of S. Perpetua*), where, besides a revised text of the "Acts," the editor, Professor Armitage Robinson, gives an account of the various versions, etc., of these famous "Acts."

Before summing up the general state of Christianity at the close of the second century, we would once more return to Asia Minor, and briefly allude to a few striking personalities who considerably influenced the Catholic Church in the latter half of the second century.

We have already noticed how pre-eminent among Christian communities this great and important province—or, more accurately, group of provinces—appears to have been in literary, and not only in literary, activity in the latter years of the first and during the first half of the second century. This was natural, as it had been for long years the home of S. John and of others of the Apostles and first teachers of Christianity, Paul having laid the foundations of the famous churches. There had lived and worked and written S. John the beloved Apostle, Andrew and Philip of the Twelve, and at least one of the famous disciples of Philip; the "other John," the Presbyter, Aristion, who had known the Lord, Papias and Polycarp. From Asia Minor, once their home, had gone forth into distant Gaul Pothinus, the Martyr-Bishop of Lyons, and the famous scholar, afterwards his successor in the See, Irenæus. To churches of Asia Minor five of the seven ever-memorable epistles of Ignatius had been written, and a sixth of these letters to Polycarp, one of their bishops. This region, too, as has been accurately remarked, was "the hotbed of heresies and the arena of controversies." After the death of Polycarp, *circa* A.D. 157, Asia Minor maintains its literary pre-eminence largely owing to the indefatigable activity of a few great Christian scholars.

Of these, Melito, Bishop of Sardis, perhaps holds the foremost place. His work began before the middle of this century. He addresses his apology to Marcus, *circa* A.D. 169–70, and this, Eusebius tells us, was the *latest* of his many writings. This scholar bishop, during a great part of his life, must have been a contemporary of S. John's disciple, Polycarp, and likewise of Papias, who had conversed with the disciples of Christ. He was therefore a link with the past, connected as he was with those who had seen and talked with the Apostles of the Lord. Of his many writings, alas! only a few meagre but precious fragments remain.

Another distinguished writer of this great province, Claudius Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis, was a contemporary of Melito, though a somewhat younger man; he too addressed an apology to the Emperor Marcus. Of his numerous works, only two short extracts remain. A third and once famous Church leader was Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, of whose letter to Victor of Rome on the date of the keeping of the Easter Festival, Eusebius has preserved a solitary but priceless extract. Although there remains to us little more than the shadow of once great names falling on the page of Eusebius, we can form from passing notices some idea of the vigour and activity of the Asia Minor Churches in the last years of the first and all through the second century.

From Asia Minor early in the century, as we have said, Pothinus went forth to the distant and important province of Gaul—perhaps the most important of the outlying "Governments" of Rome. As Pothinus was ninety years old at the time of his martyrdom in A.D. 177, the tradition which suggests that he was sent to Gaul by Polycarp of Smyrna is quite possible. There are, however, many proofs, more trustworthy than the comparatively late tradition connected with Pothinus, which link the Churches of Southern Gaul with the Churches of Asia Minor, and which indisputably tell us that the former were the daughter Churches of the Asian communities of which we have been speaking.

(1) Very close from remote times was the commercial connection between the Western cities of Asia Minor and Southern Gaul. It seems, therefore, natural to assume that the flourishing Christianity of the sea-board cities of proconsular Asia, Smyrna, Ephesus, etc., would follow the usual channels of commerce.

(2) The well-known letter, to which we have referred at some length, giving the graphic picture of the sufferings of the Christians of Lyons and Vienne in the persecution of A.D. 177, was addressed to "the Brethren that are in Asia and Phrygia." This shows the closeness of the ties which connected he Christians in Gaul with the Churches of Asia Minor.

(3) The most prominent Christian in the Gallic Churches

after Pothinus, the bishop, was Irenæus, who succeeded Pothinus as Bishop of Lyons A.D. 178. Now this Irenæus, we know, passed at least his youth in Asia Minor, when Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna.

We have already, in our sketch of Polycarp, quoted Irenæus' touching memories of his master. We may thus regard Irenæus as a link between Gaul and Asia. His training in Smyrna he never forgot, alluding to it on various occasions in his writings, which have come down to us.

This disciple of the Smyrna Church in his later life became the most illustrious bishop in Christendom. Of his career we possess too few details to give any complete picture. We hear of him in Rome, paying a long official visit to the great Italian see; we can faintly trace his busy active work during a somewhat long tenure of the chief Gallican see of Lyons. A rather late tradition speaks of him as a most successful and unwearied preacher of the Faith, as one who rallied round him in Lyons and the surrounding districts a large and influential Church; dying, as Gregory of Tours tells us, a martyr, somewhere about A.D. 197; but over this martyrdom there hangs a doubt, as there is no mention of it by Tertullian, or later by Eusebius.

That he lived to the end of the second century is, however, certain. The traditions and teaching of the Asia Minor Churches were faithfully preserved and taught in these daughter Churches of Gaul, notably in respect of the date on which the Easter Festival should be kept. Here Irenæus in opposition to Rome and her bishop, followed the practice of Asia Minor, presumably derived from the teaching of S. John.

But though details concerning the years spent in Gaul are wanting, as far as later ages are concerned, Irenæus will ever live in his book, written against those many Oriental heresies, so common in Asia Minor, which had naturally found their way into the connected communities of South Gaul.

This book, a lengthy treatise divided into five books "Against Heresies," is a great and important work. In many respects it is the weightiest writing of the early Church which has been preserved to us. The first two books contain

a minute description and a criticism of various notable heretical sects, both Gnostic and Ebionite*; the remaining three are an exposition of the doctrines of Christianity as they were taught in the latter half of the second century in all the Catholic Churches. From this writing we derive many side-lights upon early Christian belief and practice, notably a clear statement of the position which thoughtful Christians occupied in the Roman Empire; and of the duties and allegiance which they owed to the Imperial Government according to the teaching of responsible leaders like Irenæus; whom we may fairly regard as the depository of the teaching of Polycarp and of those great theologians and writers who flourished in the second century in the Eastern centres of Christianity in Asia Minor. In Irenæus' book we have also a clear statement of the attitude of the Catholic Church, *circa* A.D. 190–180, towards the Canonical writings of the New Testament.

Here it may be safely said that the authority which was then attributed by the Christian communities of Asia and Gaul to the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of S. Paul, several of the Catholic Epistles, and the Apocalypse, falls in no respect short of the authority attributed to these books in the fourth or in the nineteenth century. Irenæus places them on the same platform as he places the Canonical books of the Old Testament, citing them as Holy Scripture in the same way, and attributing them to the respective authors whose names they bear.

When Irenæus wrote, in the last quarter of the second century, these books of the New Testament were evidently universally used and looked upon as absolutely authoritative in the Catholic Church; and this, we should bear in mind, was the recorded practice of the Church within a hundred years of the death of S. John, and must have been so for at least thirty or forty years before; for Irenæus clearly learned his belief from Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of S. John. The general reception of the books of the New Testa-

* See Appendix F.

ment Canon was evidently coincident with the days when men lived who had talked with the Apostles of the Lord.

On the subject of the obedience of Christians to the Imperial authority, he bases his teaching on the words of S. Paul, who is singularly clear in his injunction of the duty of Christians to submit themselves to all lawful constituted authority; Irenæus even quotes our Lord as one who paid tribute to the Roman officials in the Holy Law. Irenæus was a Millenarian, but so, in fact, were most of the Christian writers of the second century. In very early days Millenarism, or Chiliasm, was inseparably associated with the Gospel itself. It is found in Justin, in Irenæus, in Tertullian; but although Irenæus considered the Roman Empire as a temporary arrangement of Providence which would presently give place to the earthly reign of Christ and His own, he never for one instant allowed this "hope," or rather expectation, to interfere with his teaching of the inevitable duty of unswerving loyalty to the existing powers. He even dwelt upon the blessings of the Roman power, as giving peace to the world.

The germs of the Creed of the Catholic Church can be traced unmistakably in earlier writers, notably, as we have observed, in the recently-discovered "Apology of Aristides," addressed to the Emperor Hadrian well-nigh half a century before the writing of Irenæus. But it is in this great work of the Bishop of Lyons that we find the earliest formulated creed, which may be said to have formed the basis of the Nicene Creed, put out after the "Peace of the Church" was formally established by Constantine in the first quarter of the fourth century.

The full title of Irenæus' master-work is "The Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge falsely so Called." It is more commonly known and quoted by the shorter title, "Against Heresies." Its five books were composed and put out separately, no doubt, as the busy active life of the great bishop allowed him leisure. The composition was probably spread over a number of years. The third book was certainly published *before* A.D. 190. The original Greek has not as yet (A.D. 1901) been found, and the work, as we now have it, exists

only in a somewhat barbarous Latin version—made evidently in very early times, since Tertullian early in the third century quotes it. The first book only, in the original Greek form, is mostly preserved in the writings of Hippolytus (early third century) and in Eusebius. Of the other writings of this famous scholar bishop, we only possess the titles, and a few precious extracts, notably the one from the Epistle to Florinus (above quoted in our sketch of Polycarp), for which we are indebted to Eusebius.

We have completed, in our chronicle of the early years of Christianity, the last quarter of the second century. We have been unable, as we stated in our earlier pages, to present any formal history of the laying of the foundation stories of the religion of Jesus of Nazareth; our authentic materials have been too scattered and disjointed. There are a few letters, some even of considerable length, written by persons of high authority in the Church; a few apologies or defences of the new religion, a few absolutely reliable stories of sufferings and death endured for the Faith's sake, a few rare mentions of Christianity by Pagan writers, an imperial rescript or two bearing on the relations of Christianity and the Empire, a certain number of inscriptions and religious emblems in the ancient cemeteries of the Christians, a few later redactions of the "Acts" and "Passions" of martyrs, from which, with the aid of recent archæological discoveries in the cemeteries or catacombs of Rome, we have disentangled some trustworthy information.

But there is no definite or consecutive history. What materials we possess we have made use of, and we have been able, from these scattered and disjointed pieces, the authenticity of which is undoubted, to frame a story of the painful, anxious growth of a community which has since influenced the whole story of the world, which after more than eighteen centuries of existence is growing still in numbers, power, and influence, which will never stop in its solemn, onward march until all the kingdoms of the world have become the Kingdom of Christ and of God.

As the second century closed, the first stage of the great

onward march had been reached. From the beginning of the third century onwards, the vast numbers of the Christians, their elaborate organisation, the position and commanding ability of certain of their members, prevented them from any longer doing their work and living their lives in that comparative silence, secrecy, and obscurity which in many respects had hitherto been of such service to them.

At the end of the second century Christianity had become a power in the Roman world. In its early homes it even seemed that Christians were to be found in vast numbers—in such districts, for instance, as pro-consular Asia, round Ephesus and the neighbouring cities, and in Phrygia and in Cappadocia. In Alexandria an important school for the teaching of Christianity flourished; in Italy and Greece there were many converts. In Italy at that time as many as sixty bishops were administering sees large and small. The Church of the capital of the Roman world was a powerful and influential community numbering its many thousands. In South Gaul we have already spoken of an important and flourishing Church in Lyons and the neighbourhood. We have seen, too, that in the wealthy and populous province of pro-consular Africa, a Church highly organised and very numerous existed, with its centre at Carthage. In the first years of the third century we read of a Church Synod with some seventy bishops gathering round the Bishop of Carthage. Here, too, at this period flourished one of the most famous of the early Christian writers, Tertullian, many of whose brilliant and picturesque writings have come down to us. From these we gather vast stores of information concerning the Church communities, their joys and sorrows, their dangers and persecutions, their temptations and encouragements. One or two well-known passages on the numbers and position of Christians from this great writer deserve quotation. They are beyond question coloured with the exaggeration of the orator and rhetorician; but that they are in the main true, and contain no fancy picture of the state of Christianity *circa* A.D. 198–201, may be fairly assumed; for his burning words receive support from

similar assertions gleaned from the reliques of other Christian writers. These all tell the same story.

In the course of his long "Apology," perhaps the best known of his extant writings, we come upon the following passage, which dwells on the numbers and widespread influence of the followers of Jesus:

"If we (Christians) desired to play the part of open enemies, would there be any deficiency in strength, whether of numbers or resources? . . . We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every place among you—cities, houses, fortresses, market places, the very camp, . . . palace, senate, forum: we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods. . . . Without arms, and raising no banner of revolt, but simply in enmity with you, we could carry on the contest with you by an ill-willed separation only. For if such multitudes of men were to break away from you, and betake themselves to some remote part of the world, why the very loss of so many citizens would cover the Empire with shame; nay, in the very forsaking, vengeance would be inflicted . . . you would be horror-struck at the solitude in which you would find yourselves amid such a prevailing silence, and that silence as of a dead world. You would have to seek for subjects to govern, you would have more enemies than citizens remaining."*

Again, in another treatise, the same Tertullian, speaking of the state of things at the end of the second century, thus writes: "Day after day, indeed, you groan over the increasing number of Christians; your perpetual lament is that the State is crowded out (by us), that Christians are in your fields, in your camps, . . . in your houses; you mourn over it as a misfortune that both sexes, that every age, that all souls, are passing over from you to us."†

And this strange and marvellous growth of the new religion was not confined to the countries occupying the centre of the Roman world, where the new teaching had taken firm root from the first days of the preaching of the Lord and His Apostles—countries such as Syria and Asia

* Tert., *Apology* 37 (addressed to the rulers and magistrates of the Empire).

† Tert., *Ad Nationes*, i.

Minor, Italy and Greece; but it had made a firm lodgment, as we have seen, in great and populous outlying provinces, such as in North Africa and in Southern Gaul—and even in lands more remote than these, for we hear of Christianity in distant Britain; while Irenæus, writing in the last quarter of the second century, appeals, as witnesses against the novelties of the Gnostic heretics, to the traditions of the Churches even of Spain and Germany.

SECTION II.—SEVERUS AND CARACALLA.

From our pictures of the inner life of the Christian Church about the close of the second and earlier years of the third century, we must pass to a rapid survey of the Imperial history of this period. Roughly, for the first 150 years of its existence, the story of Christianity is the story of a separate people: of something apart from the Empire. But after the death of Marcus their numbers and influence brought the Christians into daily contact with the Government in Rome or in one or other of the provinces.

The story of the Church can no longer be kept quite separate from the story of the Empire.

From the accession of Commodus to the accession of Constantine, a period of a little more than a hundred years, a brief account of the political changes of the Government of the Empire will be necessary, as the lines of the story of the Church and the lines of the story of the State cross and re-cross each other.

On the last night of the year 193, Commodus, the unworthy son of Marcus Aurelius, perished in a palace intrigue, assassinated by members of his own household; foremost among whom was Marcia, who once loved him, and who in everything, save possessing the official name, was Empress; to this Marcia we have already referred as the warm friend of the Christian community. The conspirators had seen many of their friends and companions in the Imperial household put to death, owing to the mad caprice of the wicked and suspicious Commodus, and, naturally dreading a like fate, determined to forestall him.

The conspirators persuaded Pertinax, a distinguished senator, to occupy the vacant throne. Their sudden choice was speedily ratified by the Senate, who rejoiced to acknowledge as Emperor one so distinguished. He had been a Minister of Marcus, and in the course of a long and busy life had successfully discharged the duties of many of the powerful offices, military and civil, of the Empire. After a reign of barely three months, before he had had time to justify his sudden election, Pertinax was murdered in a military revolt of the Prætorian Guards, who formed the standing garrison of Rome; with whom the newly-elected Emperor was unpopular, owing to his strictness in enforcing discipline.

These powerful and insolent guards, numbering at this time probably not more than some sixteen thousand men, but perfectly trained and armed, feeling that they were in a way masters of the metropolis, positively offered the Imperial purple to the highest bidder. An elderly Senator, possessed of great wealth, one Didius Julianus, only known in history through the infamous bargain he concluded with the Prætorians, for a brief period was reckoned among the Roman Emperors. The election, however, of the Roman Guards, far from being confirmed in the provinces, was pronounced null and void by the three powerful armies stationed on the frontier provinces of the Empire, each of which at once saluted its own general as Emperor of Rome. Severus, the commander of the Pannonian Legions—Pannonia with Dalmatia was a vast region situate between the Danube and the Adriatic —after a contest lasting some three years, eventually succeeded in overcoming his competitors, and was acknowledged universally as Master of the Roman world. A native of North Africa, Severus was a great and successful soldier, and reigned from A.D. 193 to A.D. 211, transmitting the Imperial succession to his sons, Caracalla and Geta; indeed, his family, with but a brief interlude, occupied the throne until A.D. 235.

An eminent and trusted general, and owing his position solely to his legions, he regarded the mighty Empire over which he ruled as his own possession, to be held, as it had been won, by the power of the sword; but in spite of the

SEVERUS.

Bust from the Palatine Hill, Rome, now in the British Museum.

military despotism of his reign, he occupies in the judgment of posterity a very different position to that filled by many of the tyrants who had preceded him. Though occasionally harsh and cruel, he was on the whole a just and impartial sovereign; and Rome, when once he was firmly seated on the throne, enjoyed, under his military rule, a period generally of internal peace and prosperity.*

We have seen that in the days of Commodus, particularly during the latter years of the reign, when Marcia, the favourite of the Emperor, exercised great influence, the Christians of the Empire enjoyed a period of comparative stillness. Marcia, if not a Christian herself, was very favourably disposed to them, and largely, no doubt, owing to her influence with Commodus, not a few out of the Christian community occupied positions of power and influence at Court. For several years after the accession of Severus to supreme power, this state of things continued, and the military Emperor evidently, during the earlier years of his reign, looked kindly upon the sect which had been so harshly treated under his great predecessor, Marcus. This period of "stillness" was enjoyed by the Church until about A.D. 202, when a great change for the worse came over her fortunes.

Tertullian, who was the contemporary of Severus, expressly tells us (*Apol.* 35, *ad. Scapulam* 4) that in the wars of the Succession which Severus waged between A.D. 193 and A.D. 197, no Christian of any note was found among the adherents of his competitors, Niger and Albinus, the generals respectively of the formidable Roman armies stationed in Syria and Britain. Indeed, it seems that the general feeling and probably the quiet influence of the Christians of the Empire were in favour of Severus during that anxious period. This would, partially at all events, account for the evidently favourable disposition of the stern soldier-Emperor towards

* The great historian, however, summing up the events of Severus' reign, takes a sombre view of the effect of his rule. After dwelling on the introduction of a military despotism, and the setting violently aside many of the ancient traditions of Rome, he concludes with these words: "Posterity, who experienced the fatal effects of his maxims and example, justly considered him as the principal author of the decline of the Roman Empire."—*Decline and Fall*, chap. v.

the Christians during the first ten years of his reign. But it must be borne in mind, that kindly as were the feelings of Severus towards Christians, no change was made in the oppressive laws which existed; none of the fatal rescripts or edicts of former Emperors were rescinded or even modified. But the effect of the known goodwill of the Sovereign was felt far and wide, and the provincial governors and magistrates generally discouraged all persecution and interference with the widely-spread communities of Christians, whom the Emperor, during the first half of his reign, was pleased at least to tolerate, if not to favour.

At the very end of the century (the second) a change began to pass over the Emperor's feelings and the policy of the government with regard to the Christians, materially affecting the position of the many communities of the worshippers of Jesus of Nazareth in Rome and in the provinces; and very early in the third century the persecution seems to have become general and even bitter.

It is not too much to say that one of the reasons which largely contributed to this persecution was the provocation of the extreme and austere party among the Christians themselves. We shall dwell at some length on the teaching of this school under such masters as Hippolytus of Rome and Tertullian of Carthage.

There was always a large and hostile section of the Pagan population in every great centre of the Empire; a section made up of men who hated the followers of Jesus for various reasons, some based on self-interested motives connected with trades and industries which suffered gravely under Christian influences, some on motives connected with the ancient superstitions of Rome, some on purely patriotic fears. A very small spark would at all times kindle this latent hostility into a blaze. The actions of the extremists among the Christians were often eminently calculated to excite this hostile section of the population; popular tumults often compelled the provincial governors and magistrates to take action against the Christians when they would willingly have let them alone.

Such actions of the extreme party are vividly pictured

by Tertullian in his well-known treatise, *De Coronâ Militis* ("The Soldier's Crown"). The incident upon which this treatise is based is a good example of the imprudent zeal which the teaching of the extremists among the Christians had inspired in many earnest though mistaken men; a zeal, of course, calculated to inflame the passions of the already hostile people, who looked upon them as enemies of the State, and as opposed to all established Roman customs. The incident, as related by Tertullian, was as follows.

The Emperors—Severus and his son Caracalla, who had been associated with him in the Imperial dignity in the year 198*—had directed a largesse to be distributed to the soldiers in one of the North African military centres. On such occasions it was customary for the soldiers to appear with crowns of laurel on their heads, the largesse being given to celebrate some successful feat of arms lately performed in one or other of the frontier wars, which were ever being carried on. On this particular occasion the soldiers, laurel-crowned, were marching past. "One of them," so writes Tertullian in admiring language, "more a soldier of God, more steadfast than the rest of his brethren,† who had imagined that they could serve two masters, marched past, his head uncovered, the useless laurel-crown in his hand. Thus nobly conspicuous, all began to mark him out, jeering at him from a distance, railing at him near at hand. The murmur is wafted to the Tribune. . . . He puts at once the question to him, 'Why are you so different from others in your attire?' The soldier answers that he had no liberty to wear the crown with the rest, and on being pressed for his reasons, he declared, 'I am a Christian.'"

The offender was conducted to the Prefects, and eventually taken to prison, where, to quote Tertullian's words, "crowned

* The exact date of this fiery and eloquent writing of Tertullian is much disputed. The French scholar Allard gives as the most probable date, A.D. 198 (originally suggested by Gibbon). Allard ascribes the treatise *Ad Nationes* to the same period, and the well-known "Apology" to about the year 200–201.

† The words of Tertullian evidently imply that a number of these legionaries were Christians.

more worthily with the white crown of martyrdom, he awaited the largesse of Christ" (*i.e.* a martyr's death).

In a fine peroration the great Christian writer bids Christians "keep for God what is His own, untainted. He will crown it if He choose. Nay, then He does choose, He even calls us to it. To him who conquers He says, 'I will give you a crown of life.'" Then, after picturing the glorious crowned ones, described in S. John's grand Apocalyptic Vision, he says to Christians, "Look at those crowns: inhale those odours; why should you condemn to a little chaplet, or to a leaf-twined coronal* the brow which has been destined for a diadem? For Jesus Christ has made us kings to God and His Father. What have you in common with a flower which is to die?"

Such acts as that related above by Tertullian were doubtless of no uncommon occurrence under the fiery, uncompromising teachings of this extreme school; and were eminently fitted to excite the fury of the Pagan populace, and gravely to influence the procedure of the Imperial magistrates in their dealings with Christians.

Statesmen might well argue that it was impossible to ignore such overt acts of contumely directed against all that Rome prized and held dear. It availed little that the great majority of Christians gravely disapproved such exaggerated and useless manifestations as the one related, and praised so very emphatically, in the *De Coronâ Militis* of Tertullian. The few irreconcileables were too often regarded as fair examples of the many; and there is little doubt that the teaching of the extremists, and its disastrous results, were among the causes which led to the bitter persecution that

*The wearing of these festal, or laurel crowns, was evidently regarded by Tertullian and his stern, exclusive school of thought *as a public concession to idol worship*. In his strange though eloquent treatise on "the Crown" he shows that no patriarch or prophet, no Apostle or preacher of the Gospel ever wore a crown. The only crowned One who could be cited was Christ, and *His* diadem was composed of thorns. His readers had full permission to be crowned as He was! On the other hand he shows how the Roman heathen deities were always represented as wearing crowns. He instances Saturn, Jupiter, Juno, Apollo, Bacchus, and Hercules. (*De Coronâ*, chaps. vii. and ix.)

broke out after the close of the second century, and weighed so heavily on the Christian communities generally throughout the Empire during the ensuing years.

But although a section—a party numerically small it is true—had by their conduct gravely compromised the whole body of Christians, and had made themselves painfully conspicuous by their determined refusal to conform even in non-essential particulars with the time-honoured customs of the State, still it does not seem that this unwise conduct, this obstinate behaviour of the extremists, was the only cause of the change in the policy of the Emperor Severus in his dealings with his Christian subjects. It was evidently something deeper, something more far-reaching; something which frequently affected the Emperor and the statesmen who were at the head of public affairs at this juncture.

It was the rapidly increasing numbers of the Christians, drawn from all sorts and conditions of men, in the army and in civil professions, their perfect organisation, their strange and unexplained unity, which struck with fears for the present, and still more with apprehensions for the future, the minds of Severus and the Pagan statesmen of his time; who were persuaded that the weal of Rome depended upon the strict maintenance of the traditional uses and customs which had helped to build up the great Empire. Tertullian gravely, not boastingly, notices this enormous and unexampled increase in the numbers of the Christian subjects of the Empire when he speaks of the universal cry complaining that the State was literally occupied, crowded out,* by these folk.

Severus and his advisers felt that a new policy must be adopted without delay towards these strange enemies who had grown up in their midst, who had effected a lodgement in every city, in every village, even in the unconquered army of Rome, in the crowded homes of the poor, in the luxurious villas and palaces of the rich, in the Senate, and in the very household of the Emperor, whose numbers were

* "Obsessam vociferantur civitatem": Tert., *Apol.* 1.

multiplying with such alarming rapidity, and whose power and influence undoubtedly were daily increasing.

The old edicts and rescripts proscribing this strange religion, as interpreted by the magistrates of the Empire, were manifestly insufficient adequately to check the rapid increase of the converts to the new religion.

There is abundant testimony to the fact that a terrible and general persecution raged in the earliest years of the third century, and probably continued without intermission all through the remainder of the reign of Severus, who died at York A.D. 211. Eusebius, writing in the first half of the fourth century, thus begins the sixth book of his "Ecclesiastical History": "And when Severus raised a persecution against the Churches, there were everywhere in all the Churches glorious martyrdoms of the champions for religion, but especially were they numerous at Alexandria; to which city, as to the noblest stadium of God, were brought the most eminent champions from the Thebais and from all Egypt, that by invincible patience under various torments and divers sorts of death, they might obtain from God a glorious crown." And again he writes a little further on (*H. E.* vi. 2), "at that time many thousands were crowned with martyrdom." Sulpicius Severus* specially mentions this as a time of severe trial, styling it the sixth persecution. The references in the words of Tertullian, a contemporary writer and teacher, to the bitter sufferings of Christians at this period are innumerable.

There is, however, some diversity of opinion among scholars as to whether a new and more rigorous legislation was adopted by the State in its dealings with the now numerous and powerful sect, or whether the old machinery of the earlier edicts and rescripts was made more effective. Those who favour the former view refer to the words of Spartianus, one of the writers of the "Augustan History,"†

* Sulpicius Severus was a writer of Southern Gaul (Aquitaine) who flourished *circa* A.D. 365-425; he is especially known as a devoted disciple and admirer of the famous Bishop of Tours, S. Martin.

† This history was the work of four, or perhaps, as some say, of six writers. It contains biographies of the Roman Emperors from Hadrian to Carinus, who

who, in his account of Severus' progress through Palestine in the year 202, mentions that among many other laws which the Emperor promulgated was one which "forbade under grave penalties that anyone should become a Jew, and the same law was to be enforced in the case of Christians."* Spartianus gives no further details here, but his words apparently point to some fresh and sterner legislation; and as the cruel persecution of the Christians immediately followed, it may be presumed that the persecution was embittered by some fresh legislation.†

was assassinated in his campaign against Diocletian A.D. 285. The lives of the Emperors before Hadrian have not come down to us. To Spartianus are attributed all the biographies in the collection up to Alexander Severus. This work was written in the times of Diocletian and Constantine, that is to say early in the fourth century. The authors, including Spartianus, were probably librarians or secretaries to eminent persons. Spartianus seems to refer to himself as being a member of Diocletian's household. These biographies make no pretension to literary merit, but are extremely valuable as a repertory of facts. They record amongst other interesting details many Imperial edicts, rescripts, etc. As a whole they appear to be generally faithful and free from any imputation of unfairness. The names of the other three writers of the "Augustan History" are Julius Capitolinus, Trebellius Pollio, and Flavius Vopiscus. The connection between these four writers is unknown. The "Lives," written by Spartianus, are formally dedicated in the first part to Diocletian, in the latter to Constantine.

* "In itinere Palæstinis plurima jura fundavit, Judæos fieri sub gravi pœna vetuit, *idem etiam de Christianis sanxit*."—Spartianus: *Severus*, 17.

† Allard, *Histoire des Persécutions* (1894), ii., chap. xi., considers the words of Spartianus above quoted a very brief résumé of an edict of Severus, and that the words "Christianos fieri" possess a double sense, viz., "to become or to be made Christians" and "to make Christians." Thus the edict made it at the same time criminal *to be a Christian proselyte* or *to make a Christian proselyte* ("les convertisseurs et les convertis"). The French scholar considers that Severus and his advisers, dismayed at the rapid increase of Christians in all parts of the Empire, and recognising that the existing laws were totally inadequate to stay the rapid and alarming propaganda of the new religion, framed this new edict to which Spartianus refers, which struck sharply at all attempts to proselytise as well as at all new converts to the Faith. Against such the magistrates were authorised at once to proceed, without waiting for any definite accusation, which was the old way of procedure against Christians in accordance with the rescript of the Emperor Trajan. Professor Ramsay (1897), on the other hand (*Church in the Roman Empire*, ix.), following Neumann, considers that no proof exists that the Emperor Severus ever issued any edict on the subject, and that the Emperor in question did no more than answer by rescript questions on the matter of how to deal with Christians addressed to him by provincial governors. Such answer by rescript from an

Alexandria, the great and world-renowned capital of Egypt, is especially noted by Eusebius in the above quoted passage as a centre of this persecution. For some time it had been a famous home of Christian teaching, and the persecution there was evidently especially hard. It seems probable that Severus, who about A.D. 202 spent some time in this great Egyptian city, was disturbed and alarmed at the influence exercised by the brilliant and popular teaching of Clement, the head of the famous Catechetical School of that city, whose lectures were attended by vast numbers, including not only Christian students but distinguished Pagans of both sexes. Hence many martyrs suffered at this time in Alexandria, although the teaching of Clement, while exalting the value of the witness of these sufferers for the Faith, discouraged all presumptuous daring on the part of Christians, and counselled them rather to avoid than court danger.

In Rome and Italy documents such as "Acts and Passions" of martyrs connected with the persecution of Severus are almost entirely wanting. The destruction of the Christian archives, including any memoranda of *procès verbaux* of trials and the like which could be discovered in the time of the "terror" of Diocletian—a destruction, of course, naturally more vigorously carried on at Rome, the seat of the Government, than in any other centre—accounts for this.* But recent archæological investigations in the great catacombs of the Appian Way partly supply the want of these lost documents.

The corridors and funereal chambers of the important catacomb over which Callistus the Deacon was appointed by Pope Zephyrinus, and which apparently was largely his design and to this day bears his name, show that *something* had rudely and suddenly interrupted the regular plan of the decorative and other works which were proceeding in that famous subterranean cemetery. Evidently, new entrances and

Emperor markedly hostile to Christianity, as was Severus evidently in the last half of his reign, would naturally have the effect of encouraging persecution. This animus on the part of the Emperor, as we have seen, had clearly influenced the persecution of Christians in the reign of the Emperor Marcus.

* So De Rossi. Compare *La Bibliotheca della sede Apostolica*, 1884, p. 22, and *De Origine Bibliothecæ sedis Apostolicæ*, 1886, p. xvi., xxi.

new passages were at that time contrived opening into neighbouring sandpits; narrow stairs were devised, the old communication and flights of steps were partly destroyed or concealed. Clearly these arrangements were made to facilitate escape for the harassed Christians who might be tracked into the sacred places, used especially in times of persecution as meeting chapels for worship, and for the celebration of the Eucharist.

It appears that at this particular period, when the important catacomb generally known as that of S. Callistus was in process of being made and decorated,* interments were not forbidden, but anything like assemblies of Christians for religious worship was strictly interdicted. Everything points to a vigorous persecution going on at Rome. Driven from their customary meeting places in the city, the harassed communities no doubt assembled secretly in these crypts and sepulchral chambers, which were more or less arranged for this purpose. Tracked by the police of the Emperor into these gloomy refuges, they sought to render them comparatively safe by blocking up some of the corridors, by destroying the usual staircases of approach, and by providing secret means of egress when so tracked.

In the great pro-consular province of North Africa, ample written materials are extant bearing testimony to the ravages of the same terrible persecution of the Christian citizens of Carthage and other North African centres.

Tertullian, writing of this troublous time, expressly speaks of such raids as of common occurrence, and refers to them thus: "We Christians are daily harassed, tracked out, surprised in our most secret assemblies." And again: "You (the Government) are in the habit of making raids upon us in our meetings and assemblies" (*Ad Nationes*, 17, and *Apologia*, 7); and in his writings we possess many vivid pictures of the trials and sufferings of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth during these sad years.

To this time, the first years of the third century, must be

* The identity of the masonry of the newly devised secret approaches, and of the walls and obstruction in the corridors and chambers, with the original work which belongs to the early years of the third century, has been established.

attributed the events so pathetically related with intimate details in "The Passion of S. Perpetua."*

In the wide district generally known as Asia Minor, where, as we have had already occasion to remark, the number of men and women who professed the Faith of Jesus from the earliest times was very great, the victims of the persecution of Severus were numerous, but details are lacking. The troubles of Christians in these provinces especially were not a little increased by the rise and progress of the heresy known as that of Montanus. The extravagance of these Montanists, their resolute refusal to conform in any way to Roman customs and practices, which they associated with idolatry, and their habit of positively courting martyrdom, seemed often seriously to affect the position of the quiet, earnest Christian folk, and to bring them into useless conflict with the Imperial authorities.†

In the last years of his reign, so disastrous a period for his Christian subjects, the great soldier-Emperor especially devoted himself to the metropolis of the world. After some seventeen centuries of wear and tear, of devastation and invasion in Rome, mighty ruins bearing the name of Severus are among the more prominent features even in the city of ruins. His great arch still dominates one end of the storied forum, while a vast and shapeless pile of remains on the south of the hill of Imperial palaces marks the site of the gorgeous house of Severus looking over the sad Campagna to Ostia and the sea.

His building work in Rome was enormous; palaces, baths, temples, huge granaries, such as even Rome herself with her magnificent record had never seen before, signalised the closing period of his career. It was, as regards noble buildings, the most brilliant period the world-capital had known. And while new stately temples were rising, and ancient fanes

* See p. 237 *supra*.

† The position and tenets of the Montanists, in whose ranks were gradually included many of the more rigorous and ascetic of the Christians of that time who refused to share in the life and pursuits of the ordinary citizens of the Empire, are described in Chapter XII., p. 326*ff*.

Photo: Alinari & Cook, Rome.

IN THE PALACE OF THE CÆSARS.

The so-called "Stadium" more probably the Imperial Garden. The ruins are mostly those of the Palace of Severus.

were being magnificently restored, while the grandest palace among all that marvellous group of palaces was being erected on that hill where the "divine" Cæsar dwelt, overlooking the immemorial Forum, the centre of all Pagan worship, the Christians of the Roman community, as irreconcilable enemies of the State, were being hunted down as they gathered in silence and in secret for prayer and praise in the sombre corridors and sepulchral chambers of their cemeteries beneath the vineyards and gardens just outside Rome. As we have already noticed, much of the work of destruction carried out with the hope of concealing these meeting-places in the great cemetery beneath the gardens which fringe the Appian Way, dates from the period of this persecution.

History relates one more campaign undertaken by Severus in the far north of distant Britain, where the wild mountaineers of Caledonia persistently refused to recognise the majesty of Rome. Probably the worn-out Emperor undertook the conduct of this last war in person in order to remove from the seductive pleasures of the capital his two sons, Caracalla and Geta. But the fatigue of the war was too much for the toil-worn soldier; for on his return from a successful campaign in Caledonia he expired at York, leaving the tremendous inheritance of the Empire to his unworthy sons.

Among the many tragedies which stained the Imperial purple, the story of the brother-Emperors, the sons and successors of Severus, stands out conspicuously. Caracalla and Geta hated each other, and the Roman world was soon appalled at hearing that the younger brother, Geta, had been assassinated at his brother's suggestion in his mother's arms.

The fears which were entertained by Severus that his sons would prove themselves unworthy of their great inheritance, when he took them from Rome on his last campaign into Britain, were unhappily too well founded. Little is known of the younger, who was foully murdered, as we have said, in A.D. 212, the year following Severus' death; but the elder, Caracalla, ranks among the vilest of the Emperors.

In cold-blooded cruelty he even surpassed Nero and Domitian. It is said that above twenty thousand persons of both sexes, some of them of the highest rank, were put to death early in his fatal reign under the vague charge of having been friends of the murdered Geta. Gibbon does not hesitate to style him "the common enemy of mankind."

The year after the death of Geta, Caracalla left Rome never to return to it, and spent the remaining four or five years of his life in moving about through the various provinces of his immense Empire; and in the course of his imperial progresses "every province was by turn the scene of his rapine and cruelty." He perished by an assassin's dagger in A.D. 217, universally feared and execrated.

Historians have noted as a curious fact that in the long line of the masters of the greatest Empire the world has ever seen, those princes who were born, so to speak, in the purple,* with perhaps one or two exceptions, were detestable tyrants, while the wiser and better Emperors were all of them raised to the throne by adoption or by election. Among the first Cæsars, from Julius to Nero, a family connection more or less close existed; and, with the exception of Augustus, they were all crime-stained tyrants. The wise Vespasian was *elected*, but of his two sons Titus died all too soon, and Domitian was a monster of vice. Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, the two Antonines, between whom no blood-relationship existed, were on the whole great and generally loved princes. But unfortunately, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was followed by his son, the execrable Commodus. After Commodus came the "elected" Severus, who, although a military despot, takes rank among the eminent Emperors of Rome; but he was succeeded by his wretched son Caracalla, who, as we have seen, too well maintained the unvarying tradition of the character of the princes born in the Roman purple.

The question arises, how came it to pass that in the

* The French historian notices this fact in the succession of the Roman Empire, as being different to our modern experience. In Rome, "C'est l'election qui sauve, c'est l'heredité qui perd." Champagny: *Les Antonins*, i. 1.

Roman Empire, in the matter of the succession to the throne a completely different experience presents itself from that which we are accustomed to in mediæval and modern times?

Now it is in an hereditary throne that people find the greatest security for the maintenance of internal peace and prosperity. The idea of an elected sovereign is well nigh impossible; the experiment would be, by universal opinion, too hazardous.* Many of the reasons for this curiously different experience are not hard to find. The Roman Empire was made up of various nationalities; a loyal attachment to an Italian family or dynasty, natural enough in Italy, would find no place in Gaul, in North Africa, or in Syria. But a deeper reason existed in the antecedents of the sovereigns of the Roman world. The "elected" was chosen for some distinguishing qualities, for some conspicuous abilities; in many cases he had been a soldier, and when called to rule was usually long past the age of youthful passion and prejudice. Trained generally in the stern discipline of a Roman place of arms, he brought with him to the throne the virtues peculiar to the camp—courage, endurance, self-restraint, and the habit of commanding. The "born in the purple," on the other hand, was brought up in the often enervating atmosphere of a Pagan court, surrounded from youth with obsequious flatterers, unaccustomed to self-denial or self-restraint. The Roman Prince "born in the purple," unlike the Prince of mediæval and modern times, lacked in any education which he received that *Christian* training which, since the religion of Jesus has become the religion of the Western world, forms so marked a feature in the education of a Prince born to an hereditary throne.

The general persecution which weighed so heavily on

* In the *Western* world the great Powers of England, Germany, Russia, Italy, and Austria-Hungary have adopted generally the principle of an hereditary sovereign. France, in late years, and in the new world, the United States, have alone chosen another form of government altogether. The vast majority of the less important countries—*e.g.*, Holland and Belgium—have followed the same example in preferring an hereditary sovereign.

the followers of Jesus in the latter half of the reign of Severus, continued, but more languidly, during the early portion at least of his successor, Caracalla's, rule. Probably the deeper political or patriotic reasons which moved Severus and his advisers to persecute were absent from the counsels of the more careless Caracalla. This Emperor is, however, generally now credited with the passing of an edict which had far-reaching consequences in the Empire, and which evidently affected adversely certain of the Christian subjects of Rome. The edict to which we refer extended the privileges and responsibilities of the citizenship of Rome to dwellers in the provinces, carrying therewith a great increase in the taxation,* to which provincials, who previously did not possess the rights of Roman citizens, were now liable. It was for this reason that this far-reaching edict was passed.

It curiously affected accused Christians, who, when charged with the crime of "Christianity," had not infrequently pleaded before the provincial magistrates their Roman citizenship, and claimed the right of appeal to the supreme Imperial tribunal of Rome, as, in fact, we see S. Paul did (Acts of the Apostles xxii. 25–9, xxiii. 27, xxv. 10–12). This right of appeal was also claimed by the Bithynian Christians when accused before Pliny the pro-prætor, by the martyr Attalus at Lyons in the persecution in the days of the Emperor Marcus, etc. But after the edict of Caracalla we find in the various Acts of the martyrs no more instances of such appeals.

The new edict gave a provincial official, if ill-disposed to Christianity, increased power; for his decision in the case of accused Christians was henceforth *final*. No Christian could any more plead the special right of citizenship as a reason for appeal in cases of condemnation.

* It was no doubt with the view of *raising the Imperial* revenue that this change in the constitution of the Empire was made. When the privilege of the Roman citizenship was so indefinitely multiplied, the value naturally became practically nil. A citizen of Rome was liable to a special heavy tax on legacies and inheritances, on the act of manumission of slaves, etc. Such a tax imposed on provincials (for as Roman citizens they would henceforth be liable) would of course largely increase the revenue receipts; but in the long run it would serve to undermine the old foundations on which the Empire was built up.

SECTION III.—FROM CARACALLA TO DECIUS, A.D. 211 TO A.D. 249.

GRADUALLY the long drawn out persecution ceased. After the year 212 we find no more records of martyrdoms in the reign of Caracalla, and now for a long while the Church enjoyed an almost unbroken peace. This period of "stillness" is said to have lasted some thirty-seven years, uninterrupted save by the short outbreak of persecution under the rule of the Emperor Maximinus.

Caracalla was assassinated by a centurion in a military intrigue, A.D. 217, and for a few months the throne of the Empire was occupied by an ambitious soldier, Macrinus, who had filled the office of Prætorian Prefect. He, too, perished in an obscure military sedition, probably fomented by a palace intrigue, without leaving any trace of his short reign behind him. The palace intrigues, under the guidance of Julia Maesa (the sister of the Empress Julia Domna, the widow of Severus), with the assistance of the legionaries of the Syrian army, procured the succession to the Empire for Elagabalus, her grandson. The close connection of the new Emperor with the great Severus seems to have disarmed any serious opposition, and Elagabalus was quietly acknowledged Emperor A.D. 218. Elagabalus had been brought up and trained as chief priest of the Sun-god of Emesa in Syria, and during his reign of four years seems to have rated his position and privileges as a Syrian Pontiff higher than any titles of Imperial majesty. His sorry distinction among the long line of Roman Emperors was his exaggerated devotion to his Oriental god. His reign was disgraced by nameless infamies, and by his wild extravagances he offended and shocked all that was serious and patriotic in the Empire.* His one notable act

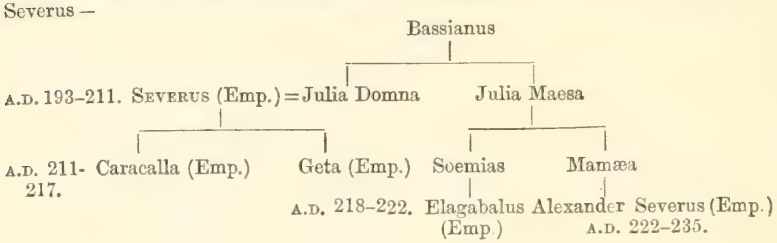
* The Roman was specially shocked at the action of this dissolute and fanatical Emperor-priest, who, bringing the sacred black stone of Emesa, under which form the sun was worshipped, with all possible solemnity to Rome, proceeded to group round this strange object of Oriental worship all that was most holy and venerated in a Roman's eyes, such as the sacred fire of Vesta, and the shields of Mars, with the view, as Lampridius says, "Romanas . . . exstinguere religiones."

was the association in the supreme power of his cousin, Alexander Severus; of whom, however, he soon became jealous, and would have destroyed him had he not himself fallen in one of those military seditions which were too common in the powerful and turbulent army of Rome. Elagabalus had reigned for about four years when he was assassinated.

The Christian in the reign of Elagabalus was not merely tolerated, he was even looked on with favour. The Christian religion, coming from the East, was regarded with special reverence by this fanatical Asiatic devotee. The God of the Jew and the Christian he even deigned to admit into the most sacred shrine of his Sun-god.

When Elagabalus (A.D. 218 to A.D. 222) fell, his cousin, whom history knows as Alexander Severus, was at once recognised as sole Emperor. During his reign of thirteen years (A.D. 222 to A.D. 235) the stillness enjoyed by the worshippers of Jesus in the days of his unworthy predecessor and cousin, remained unbroken. The favour shown to them by the half-crazy Emperor-priest was continued for more worthy reasons. It was a quiet time indeed, such as had never yet been experienced by the Christians. Historians are unanimous in the praise of the great-nephew * of the wife of Severus. None of the Emperors who in succession sat on the throne of the first great Cæsar have a fairer record than he. Surrounded by wise and prudent ministers, his whole thoughts, during his too-short life, were devoted to correct the abuses which disfigured the Imperial administration, and to restore the glories and felicity of the age of the noble Antonines; while every endeavour was made, though with only partial success

* Table showing family connection of Alexander Severus with the Emperor Severus —



it must be confessed, to re-introduce something of the ancient discipline and spirit into the mighty army which had come to regard itself as the maker and unmaker of the sovereigns of Rome.

The beautiful character of this Emperor had been formed with exceeding care by his mother Mamæa, the niece, as we have said, of the Empress Julia Domna. Mamæa some believe to have been a Christian; she certainly was strongly influenced by the words and writings of the greatest living Christian teacher, Origen. Eusebius (*H. E.*, vi. 21) thus writes of this princess: "Mamæa, the Emperor's mother, a woman distinguished for her piety and religion, when the fame of Origen had now been everywhere spread abroad, so that it also reached her ears, was very eager both to be honoured with the sight of this man, and to make trial of his skill in divine things so greatly extolled. Therefore, when staying at Alexandria, she sent for him . . . With her he (Origen) stayed some time, exhibiting innumerable matters calculated to promote the glory of the Lord, and to evince the excellence of divine instruction."

And yet it would be an error to imagine that this amiable and earnest Alexander Severus was a Christian. He, too, following the example of such eminent Emperors and statesmen as Augustus and Marcus, was firmly persuaded that the stability of the Roman Empire in large measure rested upon the maintenance of the ancient traditions; and these were inextricably mingled with the old worship. So we find Alexander Severus and his ministers* very early in the reign sending back to its original home in Syrian Emesa, the black stone which was said to have fallen from heaven, with its gorgeous setting of gems, which represented the Sun-god; and replacing in their ancient shrines the statues and immemorial emblems of the old gods of Rome, which had been moved therefrom by Elagabalus.

* Through the influence of Mamæa, his mother, the youthful Emperor, from the first, was surrounded by a council of sixteen Senators, distinguished for their experience and patriotism. Of these the most eminent was Ulpianus the great Jurist, who afterwards perished in a military *émeute*, most unfortunately for the Empire.

The young Emperor, so his historians tell us, in the private chapel of his palace, among the images of his deified Imperial predecessors, placed statues of others who he considered had won a right to adoration. Abraham and Jesus Christ were among these. One fact certainly remains unchallenged; during the years of Alexander Severus' rule the Christian lived unmolested. For nigh two hundred years his position in the Empire had been, as Tertullian curtly puts it, "non licet esse vos" (it is not lawful to be you). The historian* of Alexander Severus sums up their position under that Prince thus: "Christianos esse passus est" (He suffered men to be Christians). But although anything like a State persecution was unheard of in this time, it is certain that the followers of Jesus were still occasionally exposed to the danger of popular fury, which ever and again, owing to the causes, whether commercial, domestic, or patriotic, on which we have dwelt, broke out against them.

It was in one of these tumultuous risings no doubt that the notorious Bishop of Rome, Callistus, perished. He will come before us presently as the determined opponent of the ascetic or rigourist party in the Church of Rome. Callistus was a great organiser, and was one of those who largely increased and planned out that vast Necropolis known as the Catacombs beneath the suburbs of Rome, to one of which, under the Appian Way, he has bequeathed his name His death apparently took place in a popular uprising against the Christians in A.D. 222–3.

But the Christians of the Empire, before many years had passed, experienced a much ruder awakening from their dreams of peace and quiet, than was occasioned by such temporary outbursts of popular fanaticism. In the year 235 the Roman world was astonished and dismayed to hear that the young Emperor and his mother, Mamæa, after some thirteen years of wise and temperate rule, had been basely assassinated in one of those disastrous military revolts, of too frequent occurrence in the Roman armies, while present with the army of Germany in its camp; and that the chief

* Lampridius, one of the writers of the "Augustan History."

conspirator, Maximinus, a rude but renowned soldier of barbarian extraction, his father being a Goth and his mother an Alan, had been selected Emperor by the legionaries composing this great frontier army.

The reign of Maximinus lasted less than three years; the soldier, who in the subordinate position of tribune of a legion had won a high reputation for his admirable powers of discipline and military administration, as Master of the Roman world showed himself a monster of cruelty and oppression. He was dreaded and feared by all ranks and orders, but as long as the army, who admired the rough commander whom they had advanced to the throne, maintained their allegiance, he could defy in safety the hatred and dread of the rest of the Empire. Through an insane jealousy of his murdered predecessor, whose grace and learning formed a strange contrast to his own rough, coarse manners and lack of education, he hunted down, proscribed, and banished all who were in any way associated with him. Hence apparently Maximinus' hatred of Christians, whom Alexander Severus certainly tolerated, if he did not absolutely favour them. For there is no doubt that, in the reign of the late Emperor, there were many Christians in the Imperial household,* Mamæa, his mother, being a Christian in all but the name.

The persecution was directed first against the more prominent members of the Church. One of the earliest official documents of the Roman Church, the so-called "Liberian Catalogue" of A.D. 354, which reproduces in its earlier part a yet more ancient document, tells us how "At this time (mentioning the Consuls of A.D. 235) Pontianus the Bishop of Rome and Hippolytus the Presbyter were transported into the unhealthy Island of Sardinia." Pontianus, when banished, resigned his position to Anteros, and the *Liber*

* Eusebius' words are very definite here. "The Emperor Alexander (Severus) . . was succeeded by Maximinus, who, inflamed with hate against the House of Alexander, consisting of many believers, raised a persecution." Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi. 28. The "House of Cæsar," the "Domus Augusti," in all its wide-reaching signification, has been fully discussed above. See p. 36.

Pontificalis tells us how he was tortured and scourged in his exile and died. The bodies of Pontianus and Hippolytus were eventually brought back to Rome. Anteros only lived a short time after his elevation.

The persecution of Maximinus was by no means confined to Rome; for Origen relates how great were the sufferings endured by the Christians of Cappadocia. We have records, too, telling of sufferings endured at Alexandria and in other parts of the Empire. Origen's treatise, "The Exhortation," addressed to martyrs (*Προτρεπτικὸς εἰς Μαρτύριον*), was written during the persecution of Maximinus.

One peculiar feature of this bitter feeling displayed by the Emperor Maximinus against the followers of Jesus seems to have been the unchaining of the evil passions of the populace, among whom, as we have seen, many ill-wishers to Christianity were always found, a hostile element never difficult to arouse. Origen gives us a vivid picture of how this spirit of enmity was stirred up at this time. Several disastrous shocks of earthquake had been experienced. The great teacher is no doubt alluding to pro-consular Asia and the neighbouring provinces of Asia Minor. The Pagan foes of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus spread abroad the rumour that all such unforeseen calamities as earthquakes, pestilences, famines, and even wars were the outcome of Christian teaching, which urged the abandonment of the worship of the gods, who by means of the earthquake, the famine, etc., avenged their insulted majesty. In this persecution of the Christians Origen alludes especially to the burning of their churches.*

Happily the sufferings of the Church in the evil reign of Maximinus continued but a short time. During the two to three years of his rule he never visited Rome; his cruelty, however, and extraordinary avarice stirred up bitter animosity in all parts of the Empire. The temples were stripped of much of their wealth, and the very statues of the gods were melted

* Origen, *Commentary on S. Matthew*, 28. The churches which this writer tells us were burned at this time no doubt had been erected in the long period of comparative stillness which had followed the death of the first Severus.

down; much of this sacrilegious plunder was distributed among the soldiers. The Emperor was generally looked upon by all outside the camps of the legionaries as a common enemy of humanity. In the great pro-consular province of North Africa, the universal discontent first took shape in the form of a rebellion against the unworthy and hated Maximinus, and Gordian, the Pro-consul, an illustrious and wealthy senator, was saluted as Emperor. With this Gordian, who was over eighty years of age, his son was associated. Rome and the Senate ratified the election of pro-consular Africa. Their reign was, however, brief. For the forces at the disposal of the Gordians were defeated by a band of legionaries faithful to Maximinus, and Gordian and his son perished: the son in battle, the father by his own hand after the defeat.

The elder Gordian was an admirable example of a Roman "grand seigneur." Descended on his father's side from the Gracchi, on his mother's from the Emperor Trajan, he owned one of those vast estates situate in Italy and Sicily, in Africa and Asia, which have never fallen to the lot of any private individual save to the members of these patrician houses of the earlier days of the Empire. Besides his stately Roman palace with its ancient trophies and gorgeous decoration, once the dwelling of the great Pompey, his villa on the road to Prænestе was celebrated for its splendour among a host of similar beautiful houses. It contained, we read, besides baths of rare magnificence and size, three stately halls, each of a hundred feet in length, and a mighty portico, resting on two hundred columns of rare and costly marbles. This great noble was at once a writer and philosopher, a student of Plato, and an imitator and passionate admirer of Virgil, the patriot poet who sang the immortal glories and virtues of immemorial Rome. This eminent patrician spent his life in the enjoyment of the most pure and lofty tastes; and yet he thought it a righteous act to use his well-nigh countless revenues in entertaining the people, when he filled the offices of ædile or of consul, by repeated shows, month after month, of the shameful amphitheatre games; those games which

inflamed the minds of the populace with a passion for blood and lust, and taught them to disregard human sufferings and to hold cheap human life and happiness—games in which three hundred to a thousand gladiators fought! Such were the strange contrasts which filled the lives of the noblest and most cultured of the Masters of the world—of the men who for two hundred and eighty years fought the life and death battle with that quiet, unresisting sect who followed Jesus of Nazareth, who counted it the highest honour to die for His Name and then to lie in those long corridors of death adorned with the rough paintings of the Good Shepherd, and the symbols of a redeemed soul and of a blessed Paradise Home.

But although the revolt of North Africa ended with the defeat and death of the Gordians, father and son, the Roman Senators, powerless in the face of the mighty armies of the Emperor though they seemed to be, flinched not from their determination to dethrone the detested soldier-tyrant Maximinus, and immediately invested two of the most worthy members of their august body with the Imperial purple. These were Maximus and Balbinus, patricians and men of consular dignity. With these two they associated a third, a scion of the Gordian family, out of respect for the memory of the princes who had just laid down their lives for the State. The Emperor Maximinus, hearing of this revolt against his authority, hurried from the banks of the distant Danube to meet the forces raised by the Emperors chosen by the Senate. For a brief time the issue of the war was doubtful, but happily for the fate of Rome the cruel tyrant was murdered as he was besieging the frontier city of Aquileia, by his own soldiers (A.D. 238). The joy of the Roman world at the fall of the cruel and avaricious soldier was universal, but alas, Maximus and Balbinus soon perished, assassinated by some soldiers in a military tumult at Rome. The boy Gordian, however, who, by the Senate, had been associated with them in the purple, survived, and was universally acknowledged Emperor.

With the fall of the tyrant Maximinus the persecution of the Christians ceased.

During the five or six years when the boy Gordian was nominally Emperor (he was only nineteen years old when he in turn was murdered), the Christians were not interfered with. After a period of some confusion in the Government, an able and distinguished minister, Timesitheus, came into power as Prætorian Prefect, and the young Emperor Gordian married his daughter; but once more the overbearing intrigues of the all-powerful army put an end to the anticipation of a wise and beneficent rule. Timesitheus, the minister, died suddenly, not without the gravest suspicion that his end had been hastened by poison, and the year following Gordian the Emperor was cruelly murdered with the consent, if not by the direct command, of Philip, a successful and popular general, whom the arbitrary will of the soldiery had raised to the throne.

Again and again the historian of the Roman Empire has to relate the sudden advent to supreme power of a military chief who, by his success in war and his skill in attaching to his person the affection of the soldiers, had won the devotion and support of the legionaries under his command. The great Roman armies, mostly stationed in the frontier provinces, were composed of men drawn not only from the various provinces of the Empire, but also largely recruited from the barbarian hordes beyond the borders. This great mass of trained soldiers was bound by but slender ties to the Senate, who still wielded a nominal superintendence over the Government; the ancient time-honoured traditions of Rome exercised but little influence over these armed and powerful mercenaries. Now it is the army of Germany, now the legionaries of Gaul and Britain, now the soldiers of the force guarding the frontiers of distant Asia, whom we find by their tumultuous election exalting to the throne of the Empire some favourite general.

In this particular instance, the army of Asia chose an Emperor known in history as Philip the Arabian, who possesses in our story of the fortunes of the early Church a peculiar interest, for he is said to have been the first Christian Emperor. Philip's reign lasted from A.D. 244 to A.D. 249.

Little is known of the early years of this Philip, an Arab

by birth. We hear of him first in command of the Roman force in the Persian campaign undertaken in the days of the younger Gordian. When Timesitheus, the father-in-law of the Emperor, died, Philip received from the young Emperor the appointment of Prætorian Prefect, and in the obscure intrigues which followed the death of Timesitheus,* Philip was saluted Emperor by the army, Gordian meeting with the tragic fate so sadly common in the case of the sovereigns not in favour with the turbulent legionaries. In this murder Philip was apparently deeply implicated.

Immediately after his accession the new military sovereign, having concluded a peace with the Persians, set out for Rome, passing Antioch on his way. A strange story is told of a scene which, in the course of his journey, took place in the Syrian capital.

The Emperor, we read, was a Christian, and on the Easter Eve of the year 244 he presented himself at the church at the hour of prayer. The Bishop of Antioch, Babylas, who subsequently received the honours of saintship, sternly refused admission to the sovereign till he should have gone through the appointed discipline of a penitent for some grave crime which he had committed. Most probably this crime was his complicity in the murder of Gordian. The story is told by Eusebius (*H. E.* VI. 34), who speaks of the "many crimes which he had committed," and adds that the Emperor is said "to have obeyed willingly, and to have exhibited a genuine and religious disposition in regard to his fears of God."

Chrysostom repeats the story with more details, commenting on the conduct of Bishop Babylas, who he says "acted like a good shepherd who drives away the scabby sheep lest it should infect the flock." † This same Babylas afterwards

* This is the minister who is styled *Misitheus* in Gibbon, chap. vii. *Timesitheus* is now generally accepted as the more accurate name.

† Considerable doubt is entertained by some historians as to the truth of this strange story, but it must be remembered that it is told formally by Eusebius, writing in the first quarter of the fourth century, and repeated by Chrysostom with more details, but with some confusion as to the exact date, at the end of the same century (the fourth). It is thus improbable that Chrysostom merely copied from Eusebius. We find it later, told in the *Chron. Pasch.*,

suffered martyrdom in the course of the persecution of the Emperor Decius.

Orosius, the Christian historian (Century V.), speaks of Philip as the first Christian Emperor, and dwells on his devotion to the Church; be that how it may, there is no doubt that the Christian Church during his reign enjoyed a time of perfect quietness, and was absolutely free from all persecution.

In his reign the secular games were celebrated at Rome with extraordinary pomp, for the fifth time since the famous representation by Augustus, A.D. 17, when Horace wrote his well-known *Carmen Seculare*. The occasion, in the days of Philip, was the accomplishment of the full period of a thousand years from the foundation by Romulus. Orosius,* who wrote about a century and a half after the days of Philip, saw the hand of Providence in the fact of a Christian Emperor of Rome being chosen to preside† over so memorable a celebration.

It is, however, very doubtful if Philip ever publicly declared himself a Christian, for the secular games, which were celebrated in the year 248, were accompanied with an elaborate Pagan ritual. Mystic sacrifices were offered during three nights on the bank of the Tiber, and a chorus of noble youths and virgins prayed in their religious hymns to the immortal gods to maintain the virtue, the happiness,

where it is stated Philip's Empress was likewise repelled from the church by the Bishop. Allard, *Histoire des Persécutions* (vol. ii., chap. vi.), accepts the story as genuine, as does, apparently, Renan, *Marc Aurèle* (p. 586, Note 2), who cites the conduct of Babylas on this occasion as a proof of the important position held by Bishops in the third century. Bishop Lightfoot (*Ignatius*, vol. i., p. 40–1) at some length repeats the incident, and quotes the authorities for it, but gives no opinion as to the authenticity or otherwise of the event in question.

* Orosius, a Christian writer, born in Spain at the close of the fourth century, was a pupil of S. Augustine and a friend of S. Jerome. His most celebrated work, *Historiarum adversus Paganos libri septem*, was undertaken at the suggestion of Augustine. It had once a wide circulation, and was translated and slightly abridged by King Alfred of England, whose rendering of the work is still extant.

† "Nil dubium est quin Philippus hujus tantæ devotionis gratiam et honorem ad Christum et Ecclesiam reportarit." (*Orosius, Hist.* vii. 20.)

and the Empire of the Roman people. There is no contemporary record showing that the "Christian" Emperor in any way declined to share in these ancient Pagan rites. The framework of Roman society in the days of Philip evidently remained unchanged in its exclusively Pagan character; on the buildings and on the coins of the period the Emperor is still styled the Chief Pontiff of the old religion.

Only one circumstance in the public life of Philip seems to point to any public acknowledgment of his profession of Christianity. The Arval Brotherhood,* one of the most ancient and distinguished of the Pagan sacred colleges, appears to have suddenly come to an end in this reign. After the times of Gordian we find no mention on any tablet of the acts and ceremonies of the Arvals. There is still in existence a long series (some sixty-seven tablets in all) of memoranda of the proceedings of this religious college drawn up by themselves and engraved on stone or marble tablets, beginning in A.D. 14 and extending to the time of Gordian; but then they cease. Among the twelve noble personages who formed this exclusive Pagan brotherhood during the time of the Empire, the Emperor himself seems to have been always included. Since, after an almost immemorial history (for they date back to the legendary period of Romulus), the Arvals evidently had come to an end in the reign of Philip, it seems, at least, a probable conclusion to draw that Philip himself put an end to this important Pagan association. The share which he, as Emperor and head of the order, would have to take, as each year came round, in the strange idolatrous rites of the Arvals before the harvest, would be eminently distasteful to one who had accepted the teaching of Christianity.

We have thus, in the sketch of the life of the first reputed Christian Emperor—in which he appears now a devout and even a penitent member of the Christian com-

* An account of the famous Pagan sacred confraternity has been already given, with some details respecting their peculiar rites, and the exalted rank of the members. See p. 161.

munity, now a worshipper, and a Chief Pontiff of the old gods of Rome—a notable but evidently not an unusual example of the extreme difficulty in which a high official of the Empire, who was a Christian, in the middle of the third century, was placed.

Such a man in the course of his duties found himself mixed up with, positively hemmed in by, Pagan rites of an immemorial antiquity, which it was difficult, even dangerous, to ignore; for such an ignoring would signify a breaking off abruptly with all the storied past of Rome, a past very dear and precious to not a few patriotic and serious Romans.

Some, possibly many, like Philip, seem to have adopted a middle course, complying with certain of the more prominent official requirements of Paganism, and generally ignoring the less public functions when deeply coloured with idolatrous rites and customs. Such men professed Christianity, which they felt was true, but continued to hold their official position, making such concession to old customs as they deemed necessary.

It may not have been, nay, it certainly was not, the noblest choice of life, but we have simply to deal with history, and to relate what actually happened.

At all events, while Philip reigned, the vast body of Christians in the Empire were unmolested, and as a consequence of the "stillness" they enjoyed, their numbers rapidly increased.

The reign of Philip, like the reign of so many of his predecessors, was cut short in a military revolt. The successive murders of a line of Emperors had effectually destroyed all feeling of loyalty in the Empire, and a sudden revolt of one of the greater armies at any moment might make or unmake the sovereign of the Roman world.

Such an uprising took place the year following the celebration of the secular games, in the army of Mœsia, a vast province on the Danube, roughly corresponding with the modern states of Bulgaria and Servia. Strangely enough, Philip seems to have been unnerved at the intelligence of

the military revolt in question. He appointed Decius, an able administrator of Senatorial rank, to restore order among the Mœsian legionaries. But his emissary was saluted by the revolted army as Emperor. In the short war that followed Philip perished—it is uncertain whether in battle or by assassination—and Decius was at once acknowledged as sovereign in his room, in the autumn of the year 249.

Orosius suggests that the Christianity of Philip had raised up many enemies among the Pagan party, and that his sudden fall must partly, at least, be attributed to his marked favour towards the dreaded religion.*

* Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, vol. iii., shares in this conclusion of Orosius, when he writes, "La foi de Philippe fut malheureuse devant les hommes et heureuse devant Dieu."

CHAPTER XI.

THE CATACOMBS OF ROME.

SECTION I.—ORIGIN OF THE CATACOMBS.

It is now time to give some details of the inner life of the Church, from the first years of the third century onwards.

In this picture, the wonderful city of the dead, usually known as the Catacombs of Rome, requires a somewhat detailed mention. We must paint with some care those vast underground cemeteries which lie beneath the suburbs of Rome, with their endless streets of tombs, and their countless chapels, adorned with paintings, inscriptions, and roughly sculptured designs, all throwing light upon the doctrines, belief, hopes and onlooks of the Christians of the first days.

And this seems to be the place in our history marked out for this special study. For in the very earliest years of the third century, *circa* A.D. 202–3, these cemeteries, some of which in their beginnings date back to the reign of Domitian, and even of Nero, assumed a new and more prominent place in the great Roman community.

Zephyrinus, Bishop of Rome, A.D. 202–218, formally placed the great cemetery, which lay beneath the vineyards fringing the Appian Way, under the special charge of his deacon, the famous Callistus; who in the end became himself Bishop of the Church in Rome, and by whose name the cemetery, which was greatly enlarged and adorned by him, became generally known. Thus, in the earliest years of the third century this great city of the dead passed out of private hands, out of the control of individual members of the churches, becoming part of the public property of the Christian community: and

the general superintendence of these vast cemeteries and of all the mighty network of meeting-rooms and chapels contained in them, was henceforth vested in an important functionary of the Roman congregation.

Care for the dead was a distinguishing feature of the early Christian Church. Of this marked characteristic, the Roman Catacombs form perhaps the most conspicuous example.

In the course of the third century this sacred possession of the Church was enormously developed; its dark corridors and sepulchral chambers were the scenes of some of the more striking events of the Christian story in Rome in the days when persecution weighed heavily on the Church.

From the earliest period of the existence of the Roman community of Christians, as far back probably as the days of the Apostles, the disciples of Jesus loved to adorn the city of their loved dead with paintings, inscriptions, or carved devices. Many of these are still to be seen, in spite of the ravages of time, the havoc of persecution, the plundering of barbaric raiders, in later days the well-meant but well-nigh equally destructive operations of bishops of Rome in the seventh and eighth centuries, who removed many thousand bodies of martyrs and others to places they deemed more secure and possessed of a greater sanctity. Some of these corridors and chapels are uncovered each year. The paintings, sculptured devices and inscriptions, marred and defaced though they are, constitute a simple and absolutely authoritative piece of testimony to the faith and the hope of the believers, which gave them courage to endure all their sufferings in the two centuries and a half which elapsed between the martyrdom of S. Peter and S. Paul and the epoch of the triumph of the Church under Constantine.

Even the Pagans of Rome paid much attention to the remains of their dead—the ashes, preserved in a funeral urn when the body had been consumed on the pyre. The wealthy Romans loved to erect tombs on the borders of the highways. The ruins of a long, apparently interminable, line of more or less stately sepulchral buildings are still to be seen, on the Appian Way and other great roads outside Rome. Round the chapel

Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome.

THE APPIAN WAY.

Showing the Avenue of Tombs.

(*cella memoriæ*) which not infrequently must have been an important building, were gardens carefully tended. In the chapel the ashes of the dead were preserved in a funeral urn. These roads, so lined with sepulchral buildings, were the popular and fashionable resort of the Roman world, and the living looked forward to the time when they, too, would rest in these well-known spots, in the midst of familiar sights and sounds. It was a strange and fanciful conception of a future state to be spent, at all events for a time, apparently in a dreamy, semi-conscious state. Sometimes these wealthy Romans would build such a sepulchre in the garden surrounding their villas. We find inscriptions on their tombs to this effect: "In sarcophago in hortulis nostris secessimus" ("We are in retirement in a sarcophagus in our own gardens"); or "In agellulis meis secessi" ("I am in retirement in my own little domain").

The poor, who made up the vast majority of the Roman world, of course made no pretensions to this luxury in death. But they, too, from the small merchant or trader down to the slave, made provision, if it were possible, for their "ashes." There were a number of associations and "guilds," to use the mediæval term, among the less wealthy Romans, the large majority of which were really burial societies, whose *raison d'être* was the provision of a fitting burial place for the ashes of the members. They were commonly designated by a religious title, such as, "The Society of the *Cultores* (worshippers) of Jove, Hercules, Diana," etc. Sometimes, however, they were named after their founder or his family. Some of these death guilds were comparatively wealthy, many of them extremely poor. Their primary object was to erect a "Columbarium," a building so arranged as to receive a number of funeral urns, each containing the ashes of a departed member of the guild. In some cases, when the expense could be afforded, a "sacerdos," or chaplain, was provided for the Columbarium, whose duty it was to perform the Pagan funeral rites for each departed member of the guild. Not infrequently a wealthy person came forward as patron and piously assisted these poor communities in the erection and maintenance of

their Columbarium, sometimes even arranging and maintaining a garden round the building where the funeral urns were deposited, and where on certain days the confraternity would meet and enjoy a common meal together. The cost of securing a niche with funeral rites in one of these Columbaria varied considerably. A very small sum indeed was necessary in the case of the members of the poorer associations. In some cases, three hundred, or even two hundred, sesterces (rather less than £2 sterling) is mentioned as the amount paid for this privilege.

The same desire to provide fitting resting-places for their dead was even more pronounced among the Christians. But whereas among the Pagan subjects of the Empire the body was burned and only a handful of ashes, representing the departed, was carefully preserved in a little vase and deposited often, though not always, in a separate sepulchre in the case of the rich, or in a building (Columbarium) adapted to hold very many such little vases in the case of the poor; among the Christians the body of the dead was never burned, but was reverently wrapped in cloths, more or less costly, and so interred.

By the Roman law, land that was used for the purposes of burial was especially protected. In this protection of the State the Christian places of interment shared. The spot where a body was buried became at once, in the technical language of the law, "religious," and was inalienable, secure for ever from disturbance. A special ritual consecration, which such a spot usually received in the case of the Pagans, threw a peculiar veil of protection over the garden and any enclosure around the tomb or tombs or Columbarium. Such ritual consecration, of course, was never sought by the Christians, as it involved certain idolatrous ceremonies; but this disadvantage was usually made good to them in their case by some deed of gift or testament on the part of the proprietor. Thus from very early times the graves and the grounds immediately surrounding them, set apart for burying the dead belonging to the Christians, were placed under the protection of the law.

Photo. Alinari & Coo., Rome.

COLUMBARIUM OF CÆSAR'S FREEDMEN.

Showing the Pagan method of Burial. Each niche contains an urn holding the ashes of the dead. The name is given from the resemblance of the niches to a pigeon-house.

From the early days of the formation of Christian communities the believers in Jesus shrank from sharing their last resting places with Pagans. Their aversion to the usual custom of burning the dead was an additional reason for desiring separate places of interment.

In tracing the story of Christian interment, the Roman Christian community may be taken as typical. In the first century several Christians of fortune, arranging in the gardens of their villas or in some pleasaunce or vineyard belonging to them, in the immediate neighbourhood of the city, a tomb for the burial of members of their house, including freedmen and slaves, would dig a few small sepulchral chambers beneath, or close to, the family burying place. They were thus enabled to offer to certain poorer brethren the "hospitality of the tomb," as it has been termed; the peculiar nature of the soil of the country around Rome being especially favourable for such excavations. This was the beginning of that vast system of underground corridors and chambers for the reception of the Christian dead now known as the Roman Catacombs. There is an admirable example of such an early arrangement for the interment of the Christian dead which still exists about two miles from Rome on the Via Ardeatina, near the Appian Way. It is known as the Cemetery of Domitilla. The original family tomb, erected probably before the owner was converted to Christianity, was evidently a gracious and ornate building. Behind it, beneath the vines and gardens of the proprietor, there is a crypt of considerable size, with long corridors and chambers arranged for a number of the dead, much of the masonry and ornamentation belonging to the last quarter of the first century.

There are other crypts or cemeteries on all sides of Rome, evidently excavated on a similar plan, with gardens and vineyards surrounding the tomb of some great and noble Roman converted to Christianity, and arranged for the reception of the many poor brethren who belonged to the communities of Christians in the first and second centuries. As for instance, the cemeteries of S. Priscilla on the Via

Salaria; S. Lucina on the Ostian Way; S. Prætextatus on the Appian Way, and several others; where the masonry and decoration of the corridors and sepulchral chambers indicate their date as between A.D. 160, or even earlier, and A.D. 200. These early cemeteries, with their time-faded frescoes, their, broken, partly ruined, fittings, supply much information respecting the ritual and faith of the Roman congregations during the century and a half upon which we have been dwelling, and the countless *loculi*, the narrow closed-up shelves where the dead were laid, give us some idea of the great numbers of the believers.

The modern name of Catacombs was unknown to those Christian communities who, with enormous pains and labour and with no little skill, planned and excavated these resting places for their loved dead; nor was it heard of for several centuries after these cemeteries had ceased to be used as places of interment. The term "catacomb" is derived from the Greek words *κατὰ κύμβη*, the latter word signifying a hollow or valley (*cf.* cwm, combe). The district on the Appian Way near the well-known tomb of Cecilia Metella, where the ancient little basilica of S. Sebastian now stands, seems to have been originally known as *ad catacumbas* ("The Hollow"). In the earlier part of the ninth century, partly owing to the repeated barbarian raids, in the course of which these cemeteries had been several times visited and pillaged, partly owing to the destructive anxiety of certain of the Popes of Rome, who had removed many of the bodies of the most prominent saints and martyrs from their original resting places to what they deemed the more secure custody of certain of the Roman churches, the famous subterranean cemeteries gradually ceased to be an object of interest and of pilgrimage, and became in time forgotten. All through the Middle Ages, however, the *one* cemetery of S. Sebastian remained still an object of reverence and subsequently of pilgrimage, no doubt owing to a persistent tradition that the bodies of S. Peter and S. Paul had reposed in the smaller crypt beneath the church for a period of years. The crypt and little cemetery beneath S. Sebastian, from the district

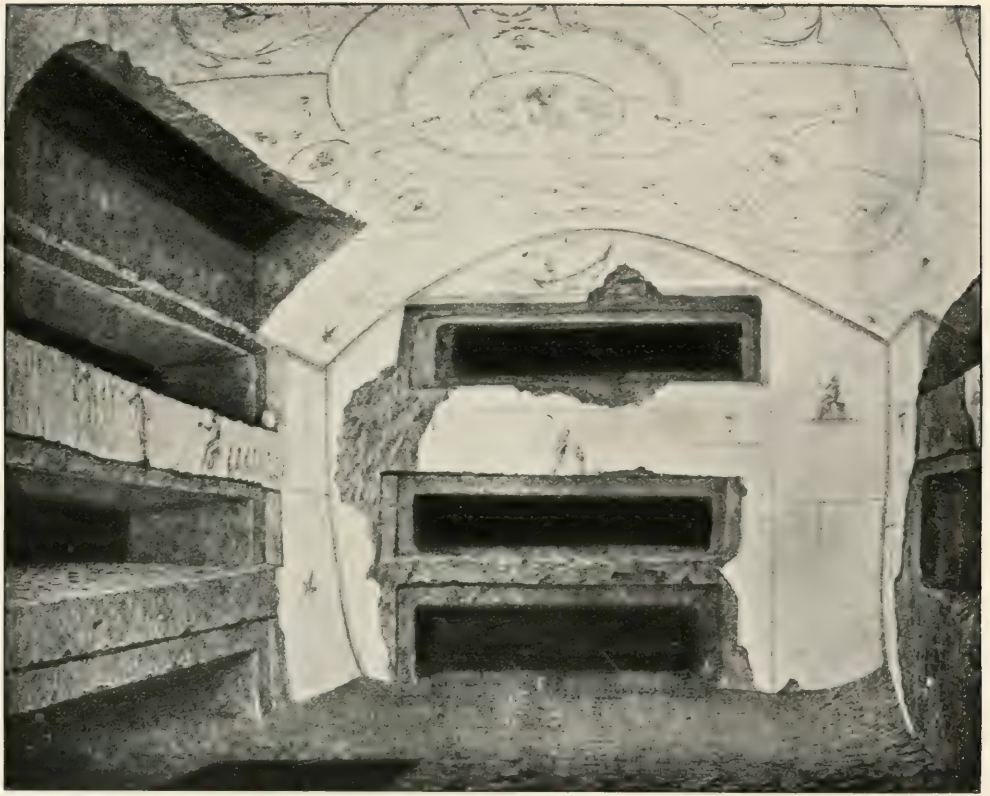


Photo: Mariani, Rome.

SEPULCHRAL CHAMBER IN THE CEMETERY OF S. CALLISTUS.

Known as one of the "Chambers of the Sacraments." It dates from the Third Century, and was probably appropriated to Presbyters and Deacons.

in which the church was situated, was known generally as "Cœmeterium ad Catacumbas."

Thus through the Middle Ages, among the shrines and many objects of sacred interest which pilgrims to Rome from distant lands loved to visit, the crypt or cemetery of S. Sebastian "ad catacumbas" still maintained a prominent position. Gradually the appellation of "ad catacumbas" came to be used for other similar underground crypts, not only in Rome and the neighbourhood, but in other cities; for instance, we find the term used at Naples as early as the ninth century. On the re-discovery of the great underground City of the Dead at Rome, late in the sixteenth century, the popular name of the catacombs was adopted for *all* the subterranean cemeteries. But it must be borne in mind that it is after all a curious misnomer, and was utterly unknown in its present general signification in ancient times.

The extent of this vast system of subterranean corridors and sepulchral chambers has been the subject of much speculation. Their most scientific explorer and historian, De Rossi, enumerates as many as forty-three distinct cemeteries in the suburbs of Rome; this list he has largely constructed out of ancient "itineraries"* and other trustworthy records. Many of these cemeteries he has succeeded in identifying, and some he has partially investigated, but only partially, for even in the case of the best known, large portions are still "earthed up." This "earthing up" was the work of Christians during bitter persecutions, probably mainly carried out in the troublous periods of the third and the early years of the fourth century. In some cases, however, little or nothing has been done by way of exploration by modern men of science, the work of excavating being difficult, dangerous, and very costly. Thus, anything like an accurate estimate of their extent is as yet impossible. Various calculations have been made by experts, giving from five to eight hundred miles as the probable extent of the galleries lined with the remains of the dead. The number of interments is also a matter of dispute: some scholars consider

* These are fully explained on p. 281.

that as many as six millions of Christians sleep their last sleep on the shelves of the dark corridors and in the sepulchral chambers leading out of them, while others put the number so low as two millions. When, however, it is remembered that in many of the catacombs there are three or four or more galleries, one excavated beneath the other, communicating by means of short flights of steps; that in each gallery there are five or six tiers of shelves; that on many of the shelves two, three, or even four bodies have been laid one alongside the other; that in the most thoroughly explored catacomb, that of S. Callistus, with its adjacent cemeteries, there are some thirty-seven or forty miles of galleries; the smaller numbers would scarcely seem an adequate estimate.

The soil of the country, which lies immediately round Rome, was peculiarly adapted for these vast works of excavation, most of the early Christian Roman Catacombs being hollowed out of a volcanic stratum technically known as the "red tufa granulare." This tufa was easily worked, besides being of sufficient consistency to admit of excavation into galleries and chambers without any danger of collapse, its porous nature always allowed any water quickly to drain off from it, thus leaving the corridors, where the bodies were usually laid on shelves specially arranged for this purpose, dry and fairly wholesome. The shelves were dug out of the tufa of the side walls, and when the dead had been laid on them the openings were hermetically closed with thick plaster, or more commonly with slabs of stone or marble, on which the name of the inmate was sometimes engraved; in some cases with a little carved picture and a few words expressive of love and faith and hope. These shelves were ranged one above the other, and have been compared, not inaptly, to the berths in a ship's cabin. Each shelf contained one or more bodies according to its depth. This was the usual arrangement of the corridors. The sepulchral chambers, of which there are a great number leading out of the corridors, vary much in size, and usually contain one or more tombs of greater importance.

Thus it was that the followers of Christ in the Roman

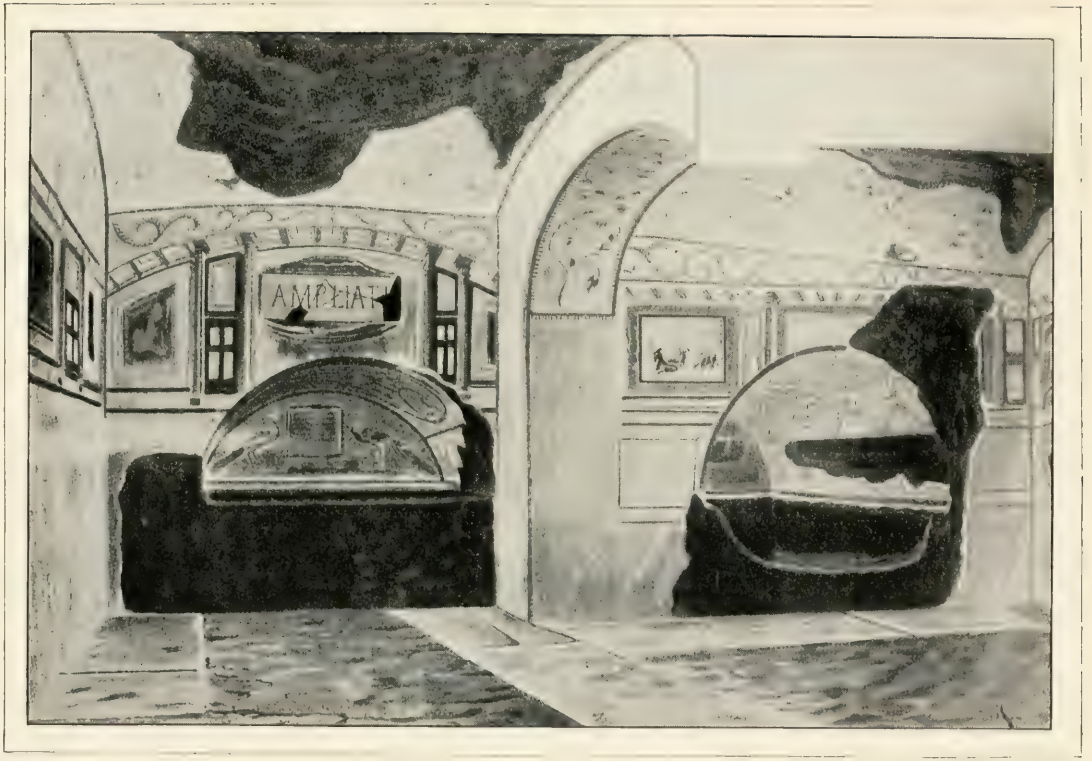


Photo : Mariani, Rome.

SEPULCHRAL CHAMBER OF AMPLIATUS.

Generally identified with the Amplias of S. Paul (Rom. xvi. 8). In the Cemetery of Domitilla (First Century).

community were enabled to bury their dead by themselves, without the defilement of heathen rites; avoiding, too, the necessity of cremation generally adopted by the Romans of the Empire. Cremation was singularly abhorrent to the early Christians, who were deeply imbued with the feelings of the Synagogue out of which, in early years, not a few of them had come. To these devoted followers of Jesus such a sepulture as that provided in the catacombs which lay beneath the gardens of the city suburbs, was inexpressibly dear, for it recalled with a strange accuracy the loved memory of the temporary resting-place of their Lord. "In the place where He was crucified was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre . . . there laid they Jesus."

As time went on there were probably but few chambers or corridors of these catacombs which were not hallowed by containing one or more of the bodies of martyrs for the Faith, more or less distinguished. The merciful laws of Rome peculiarly facilitated this practice; for the bodies of those who had suffered capital punishment were, as a rule, given up to the friends who might desire reverently to inter their remains. Even the ashes of those who had been burned by public sentence were allowed to be collected by those who loved the dead, for subsequent interment. Very rarely, and then only in cases of treason against the State, was this last kindly office not allowed by the laws of Rome, ever tender and respectful to the dead. It will be remembered how readily Pilate gave up the body of the crucified Lord to His friends. This gracious and humane custom of Rome in the case of the dead who had suffered the extreme penalty of the law, explains the well authenticated presence of so many bodies of more or less distinguished martyrs in the various subterranean cemeteries around Rome. To cite a few well-known instances. In the cemetery of S. Domitilla we find traces of the sepulture of S. Nereus and S. Achilles; in the Vatican crypt, along with other illustrious martyred dead, lie the remains of S. Peter*; in the closed catacomb

* In Appendix B, at the end of this volume, will be found a short account of the "Tomb of S. Peter," and also Drei's plan of the part of the Vatican Crypt, where

beneath the basilica of S. Paul outside the walls, a universal tradition tells us, is the sepulchre of the martyred apostle of the Gentiles; in the cemetery of S. Callistus we find traces of the sepulture of many Roman bishops of the third century, several of whom we know were martyrs; in the same great cemetery the original tomb of the virgin martyr, S. Cecilia, is now well known; in the catacomb of S. Prætextatus, recent discoverers have found the graves of S. Januarius and of several other historic martyrs. In the cemetery of S. Agnes was the tomb of the virgin saint; in the Ostrian cemetery the tomb of S. Emerentiana, the martyr foster-sister of S. Agnes, has been identified quite lately. Very many other similar examples might be quoted; and these hallowed graves are by no means merely traditional sites, but portions of tablets, with inscriptions more or less perfect, still remain, thus confirming very ancient traditions which for so long a time have designated these spots as peculiarly sacred

The question has been raised whether these enormous cemeteries of the Christian dead were ever used by the communities of Rome as places of religious assembly, or even of refuge in times when persecution was especially active. There is little doubt that all through the second and third centuries religious services, more or less frequent, were held in certain of the larger sepulchral chambers on special days, particularly on the anniversary of the dead who slept in the chambers in question. It is also certain that in times of danger many a hunted Christian—probably whole congregations—found a temporary hiding place in the sombre labyrinths of one or other of these subterranean burying-places.

SECTION II.—HISTORY OF THE CATACOMBS.

We can best divide the eventful story of the Catacombs of Rome into four periods:—

The First extending from *circa* A.D. 50 to *circa* A.D. 202.

the remains of the great Apostle presumably lie. Drei was clerk of the works of S. Peter's in the pontificates of Paul V. and Urban VIII.; his plan was published in A.D. 1635.

The Second extending from *circa* A.D. 202 to *circa* A.D. 313.
The Third extending from *circa* A.D. 313 to *circa* A.D. 410.
The Fourth extending from *circa* A.D. 410 to *circa* A.D. 817.

After the last-mentioned date, A.D. 817, the catacombs became gradually forgotten, and were ignored for a long period, extending over some seven hundred and sixty years, when a chance discovery by some labourers of a cemetery lying beneath a vineyard on the Via Salaria in A.D. 1578, in the reign of our Queen Elizabeth, brought before men's notice once more this wonderful City of the Dead; and since that date the interest of scholars and explorers has, to some extent, been aroused, and fitful and intermittent exploration works have been undertaken in what has been popularly, though somewhat inaccurately, termed "Roma sotterranea"—inaccurate because no crypt or catacomb was ever excavated beneath the city proper.

The First Period—*circa* A.D. 50 to A.D. 202—witnessed the devoted and generous conduct of some of the wealthier brethren, who provided graves, and exercised what we have termed "the hospitality of the tomb" in the case of their poorer companions in one common Faith by providing places of interment in crypts and catacombs, excavated in the vicinity of their own family burying places, beneath their gardens and vineyards. These crypts, as time went on and the numbers of the Christians kept increasing, developed insensibly; more and more corridors and sepulchral chambers were perpetually being excavated, and when the limits of the property of the original donor of the cemetery were reached, passages and chambers were dug on a lower level, beneath the first level; thus, four, five, and in some instances six, storeys of these corridors underlie the garden or vineyard which was originally devoted to this generous and pious use. In this way, a cemetery, during the first hundred and seventy years which followed the Ascension of the Master, would gradually grow into that strange labyrinth of passages and chambers filled with the dead, which we are in the habit of styling a catacomb. Several well-known cemeteries belong to this first period. The dates can be determined with fair accuracy, partly from the

inscriptions found on some of the slabs which seal the shelves on which the dead sleep, partly from the special style and execution of the decorated portions.

Among the best-known catacombs which belong to this early period (the first and second centuries), foremost must be reckoned the crypt of the Vatican, where a very ancient tradition tells us the remains of S. Peter were laid, and close to S. Peter a long line of martyred bishops of Rome who succeeded him, reaching to Pope Victor, who was buried in the Vatican cemetery A.D. 202. The successors of Victor were interred in another place, of which we shall presently speak.

But there are no remains, properly so-called, of this most ancient Vatican cemetery, it having been destroyed at an early date, probably in the fourth century, to make room for the foundations of the mighty basilica of S. Peter.

The present crypt of S. Peter, however, with the Confessionary of the great Apostle, occupies a portion of the site of the ancient Vatican crypt. But an authentic record is preserved of what was seen in A.D. 1626, when the works in connection with the foundations of the enormous bronze baldachino which now overshadows the High Altar of S. Peter's were being arranged; and hence there is little doubt that the great Apostle's remains are still in the spot assigned to them by immemorial tradition.

Another most ancient crypt which a probably accurate tradition points to as the resting-place of S. Paul has also been in great part destroyed, to make room for the foundations of the basilica of S. Paul, "outside the walls." Some portions of this ancient cemetery still exist, but in a ruinous condition. These portions are known as the cemetery of S. Lucina or S. Commodilla.

But, although it is impossible for the present to investigate closely these hallowed crypts of the Vatican and S. Paul *fuori muros*, we have in perfect condition still other cemeteries of well-nigh an equal antiquity. The most notorious of these are, bordering on the Appian Way, the catacomb of S. Domitilla, the kinswoman, as some maintain, of Vespasian, with its beautiful painted decorations, equal in artistic excellence to

Photo: Mariani, Rome.

SEPULCHRAL CHAMBER IN THE CEMETERY OF DOMITILLA.

Showing the Decoration of the First Century.

many of the Pompeian remains; the catacomb of S. Prætextatus, with its touching memories of various martyrs buried there as early as A.D. 162; the catacomb of S. Lucina, joined by underground corridors with the great cemetery known as that of S. Callistus. On another side of the city, on the Salarian Way, lies the once famous cemetery now generally known as the Ostrian Catacomb, but in early times usually styled the "cemetery of the Fountain of Peter," where an ancient tradition relates that S. Peter used to baptise and to relate his memories of the Saviour—memories now enshrined in the Gospel of S. Mark.

To this little list of very ancient cemeteries must be added the catacomb of S. Priscilla, on the New Salarian Way, possessing traditions which connect it with the Apostles in the middle of the first century. It was said to have been excavated in a garden belonging to Pudens, the disciple of S. Paul. The character of certain decorations, still visible in this most ancient catacomb, fully bears out the tradition of its being, in part at least, contemporary with the Apostles.

The Second Period of the story of the catacombs may be reckoned as extending from *circa* A.D. 202 to A.D. 313, the date when the Peace of the Church was sealed by the famous edict of the Emperor Constantine. It was in this second period that the catacombs reached their full development. We have seen that in this third century the Christians enjoyed long seasons of comparative stillness after the time of Severus. Then it was that the Church—we are speaking especially of the Roman Christian community—not only very largely multiplied its numbers, but elaborately organised itself. In this work of organisation, the construction and management of the cemeteries where the Christian dead were reverently laid to rest, and which undoubtedly were used, even in times of "quietness," for many solemn gatherings, occupied a prominent place.

At the close of the second century it is probable that the Church in Rome numbered some 50,000 souls. It is evident that with such numbers dwelling in the Imperial city—numbers, too, ever increasing—the primitive arrangements for the management of the cemeteries, so precious in

the eyes of the early Church, would have to be recast. So we find in the time of Pope Zephyrinus, about the year 202, that Callistus, the archdeacon who subsequently succeeded Zephyrinus to the see of Rome, was specially entrusted with the government of the clergy, and *was set over "the cemetery."* The words are from Hippolytus, one of the most learned Christian writers of that age. From this time (A.D. 202) onward the mighty and ever growing subterranean necropolis evidently passed out of the private hands of the original donors and their descendants, and became the property of the Church, which henceforward undertook its development, management, and supervision. Callistus greatly enlarged, if he did not construct, the important cemetery known by his name, arranging in it a special sepulchral chamber for the bishops of Rome, in which, from this date onward until the Peace of the Church some 111 years later, most of the Roman Pontiffs were interred. The discovery and identification of this crypt or sepulchral chamber of the third-century popes has been one of the most interesting "finds" of that great scholar in the catacomb lore, De Rossi.

During the years of comparative "stillness" in the first half of the third century the cemeteries at Rome were wonderfully developed. In many of them elaborate works or ornamentation were carried out; oratories, memorial "cellæ," dwellings for the Fossores and other officials of the Church, were built above ground. No attempts at concealment or secrecy were made. But, as the century wore on, darker days succeeded; the persecutions revived and even grew in intensity as time advanced. The effect of the troublous times on the works connected with the great underground cemeteries of Rome was very marked. The regular and elaborate plan of the ever-growing corridors and galleries was changed. A curious labyrinth of passages succeeded to the well arranged system of straight corridors with their many highly decorated chambers often arranged for meetings and special worship; secret approaches were contrived; hidden stairs were constructed. Many of the cemeteries were in part "earthed up" to prevent desecration.

The staircases leading to and from the many corridors were in many instances destroyed. The buildings which in quieter times had been erected at or hard by the entrances to the cemeteries were abandoned and often pulled down. The years which preceded the final Peace of the Church appear to have been especially a time of havoc and destruction. Miles upon miles of corridors and sepulchral chambers were closed up and filled with earth and *débris*, the approaches to them being concealed and destroyed, and no human eye has looked upon them since that terrible time. And in our days the pilgrim to the Eternal City, who is curious to trace out the work of the early Christian communities of Rome, as he wanders through these strange streets of the dead, which are now partially opened, is constantly stopped in this or that corridor by vast piles of earth and rubbish which have never been cleared away. A work of complete re-excavation, intensely interesting and valuable to the archæologist and historian, would be enormously costly and, in many cases, not a little dangerous, and would require extreme caution. A little is being done in this direction it is true, but progress here is slow.

The next, the Third Period in the story of the catacombs, lasted from A.D. 313, the date of the final Peace of the Church, until A.D. 410,* the year of the raid of Alaric the Visigoth, when Rome was sacked.

After A.D. 313 the position of Christianity in the Roman world was completely changed. There was no longer any necessity for the catacombs. Privacy, complete separateness, comparative secrecy were no longer requisite for interment of the Christian dead. All rites, whether for the living or the dead, after A.D. 313, might be freely performed in the light of day. Paganism was vanquished, and in all its varied forms was a fast dying religion. The Roman world, outwardly at least, was largely Christian, from the Emperor and his court downward through all the grades of society.

* Although this period lies outside the area of this work, a few words on the subsequent history of these wonderful cemeteries is necessary to complete our sketch.

After the date of the Peace of the Church, A.D. 313, we only find records of four or five fresh subterranean cemeteries being excavated, and these of small size and of little importance. As the fourth century advanced, the number of interments in any of the catacombs grew fewer and fewer, and before the century closed had virtually ceased. Many basilicas or churches of various sizes were erected over the ancient cemeteries, and the dead were usually laid in open areas around these sacred buildings.

During this century, the fourth, a deep reverence began to grow up in men's minds for the buried cemeteries of the past. It was in these dark corridors and lightless chambers that their Christian forefathers had been laid to sleep, the brave pioneers of the Faith, men who had confessed their belief in Christ under circumstances of extraordinary difficulty and often of extreme danger. There, too, slept not a few of the noble company of martyrs, men and women, who had positively laid down their lives for the Faith. Those catacombs which, in one or other of their sepulchral chambers, held the graves of the more conspicuous of these confessors, were the especial objects of reverence among the Christians of the new age of "Peace." This not unnatural feeling of tender homage was voiced by Pope Damasus, who ruled the Church of Rome from A.D. 366 to A.D. 384. Damasus will ever be remembered in the annals of the Church for his countless works of skilful and reverent restoration of portions of the wrecked and desecrated catacombs which had suffered so severely in the later persecutions. Many were the ruined tombs of the most conspicuous saints and martyrs restored by him. To this day fragments of the beautifully engraved slabs, the work of his chief artist, Philocalus, are constantly coming to light and assisting scholars like De Rossi to identify especially sacred spots in these, too often ruined, cemeteries. Pope Damasus not only restored and put in order many of the shrines and sepulchral chambers, but he rebuilt the destroyed staircases in many places and rendered it possible for the pilgrims from far distant countries in his own day and for several generations following to visit spots famous

for deeds of endurance and patient bravery on the part of known and unknown martyrs.

An enormous extent, however, of "earthed-up" and otherwise wrecked corridors and chambers remained untouched by Pope Damasus, and indeed have never been touched by mortal hand since the troubled days of persecution.

The Fourth Period in the story we reckon from A.D. 410, the date of the raid of the Visigoth Alaric. This was the first barbarian occupation of the Imperial City, and this fourth period covers some four hundred years, closing about A.D. 817, when, owing to events which we shall very briefly sketch, public interest in the catacombs altogether passed away.

One striking result of Pope Damasus' loving work of restoration in the more famous spots in the great underground cemeteries was to bring prominently before the eyes of the various strangers and pilgrims, many from distant countries, to the immemorial city, the memory of the brave Confessors of the Faith which the world of Rome now generally acknowledged. The restored shrines of the catacombs in fact became the principal objects of pilgrimage; guides and itineraries for visiting them were composed. Fragments of some of these have come down the stream of time to us, and have proved of the greatest service to De Rossi and other scholars of our day.

The hallowed sites, however, were grievously interfered with, even recklessly injured, and in many cases rifled of their contents, in the course of the successive raids and invasions to which Rome and Italy were subjected by barbarian enemies. Among the more destructive of these we would specify the raids of Alaric the Visigoth in A.D. 410; that of Vitiges, another Gothic chieftain, in A.D. 537, who apparently singled out the catacombs as especially the object of his passion for destruction; and lastly that of Astolphus the Lombard in A.D. 756.

It was, of course, the hope of coming upon gold and gems which stimulated the various hordes of barbarian raiders to ransack the catacombs, knowing, as they did, how precious

these ancient shrines were in the eyes of the Christians. But, strangely enough, in some instances, and in the case of the Lombard Astolphus, the idea of procuring the sacred relics of the remains of the dead, either for themselves or for the more sordid purpose of selling them, seems to have been the motive.

Some of the bishops of Rome, too, unconsciously of course, in attempting to repair the mischief done by barbarian spoilers, irreparably injured the old paintings and sculptured work by overlaying them with their new designs and ornamentations; and in the ninth century these prelates completed the work of havoc and spoliation by translating a vast number of remains from those portions of the catacombs which were still open, to various churches in Rome. They pleaded as the excuse for this strange act of sacrilege the greater safety of the churches in times of confusion and pillage. There is, for instance, an inscription in the ancient church of S. Prassede which tells how, in A.D. 817, two thousand three hundred bodies were removed to this church from the catacombs by Pope Paschal I. Vast numbers of bodies were removed at this period from their original resting places in the ancient subterranean cemeteries to the churches of S. Silvestro, S. Martino, and the Santi Quattro Coronati. Among these strange translations of remains of the dead from the catacombs we read of *twenty wagon loads* of bones being removed to the Pantheon. These wholesale removals, or translations, on the part of the bishops of Rome; the destructive work of ransacking and pillaging repeated by successive hordes of raiding barbarians, Goth, Vandal, and Lombard; are more than sufficient to account for the innumerable empty and ruined graves which, tier upon tier, line the corridors and sepulchral chambers on all sides in the various catacombs into which the modern pilgrim and student is able now to penetrate. There still remains, however, an enormous burying ground, lying beneath the suburbs of the immemorial city, yet covered up, securely protected by masses of earth and *débris*.

The catacombs available for the visits of strangers and

pilgrims being thus, before the years of the ninth century had run their course, stripped and desolate, lost in the eyes of the many visitors to the Eternal City their peculiar charm. The precious relics of saints and martyrs, even the remains of the rank and file of the Christian dead, had largely disappeared. So it came to pass that, the special interest being gone, the very existence of the catacombs was gradually forgotten. Besides, for some two hundred years mankind, harassed by perpetual wars, by anarchy and confusion, was too wretched to devote much time to pilgrimages. And, when in quieter times the old fervour and zeal for visiting sacred shrines and holy places awoke again, the catacombs of Rome, once so cherished and revered, had ceased to be even "a memory." A dense cloud settled down upon them —a cloud which never lifted for some seven hundred years.

The chance discovery of some labourers digging in a vineyard in the Via Salaria, in the year 1578, to which we have already alluded, brought to light one of the ancient cemeteries, with its curious paintings, its strange sculptures, its pathetic inscriptions, its seemingly endless corridors, lined with (mostly) empty graves. The world of Rome then came to know that a marvellous unexplored City of the Dead lay beneath its feet; old records were investigated, ancient itineraries* and pilgrim guides were searched into, and the forgotten story of the past once more was read and studied.

* Of these "Itineraries" or local guide books to the Sanctuaries of the City of Rome—where the catacombs *as they existed in the seventh century* are described—we possess several: perhaps the oldest is a MS. bound up accidentally with the works of Alcuin, Charlemagne's Minister of Education; internal evidence shows that this "Itinerary" was written on the spot, *circa* A.D. 625-638. This guide book was completed *before* the wholesale translations of the bodies by certain of the Popes had begun.

Another "Itinerary" is contained in the works of William of Malmesbury, who wrote at the end of the eleventh century or beginning of the twelfth. But the "Itinerary" is plainly copied from a document written some four or five centuries earlier.

A MS. at Einsiedeln (Switzerland), published by Mabillon in 1685, contains another of these curious ancient "guide-books" to Rome. The date is *circa* A.D. 750.

These "Itineraries," or guide-books to the Rome of the seventh and eighth centuries, have been of the greatest assistance to De Rossi and his fellow-scholars in their exhaustive work of exploration and identification of the catacombs.

We have already spoken of the "find" of A.D. 1578 and what sprang from it; and thus a new chapter bearing on the story of the early Church, when Christianity was a forbidden religion, was added to the somewhat scanty material out of which the tapestry of such a history as this is woven. It is a chapter written on marble and on stone—its genuineness no lynx-eyed critic will ever dare to question.

SECTION III.—ART OF THE CATACOMBS.

THE present state of grim desolation which the accessible portions of the catacombs exhibit, by no means gives an accurate idea of their appearance when they were in daily use.

The interminable corridors were then neatly finished and, in some cases, adorned with elaborate ornamentation. The graves with their many tiers, which now so often are yawning and ghastly apertures—some quite empty, some still containing a few mouldering bones—were then all hermetically sealed. In many cases, though evidently not in all, the covering slabs were inscribed with the names of the tenants, and often in addition with a few pathetic words, expressive of Faith, Hope, and Love; some, too, were adorned with rough though striking emblems of the Faith, such as the monogram of Christ and the palm branch. Leading out of these miles and miles of grave-lined corridors are a vast number of compartments of various sizes, the mortuary chambers evidently of the more wealthy and important members of the Christian congregations of Rome. These were often more or less richly decorated. The roofs are often painted; the sepulchres are adorned with both paintings and carved work in marble and stone. The marble work has well-nigh all disappeared; but the paintings on the tombs, the walls, and the roofs of the chambers, in many cases remain, though sadly disfigured and faded; and these symbolic ornaments can still, in many instances, be deciphered by experts and scholars. These dim, blurred paintings, these remains of

inscriptions, enormously enhance the importance of the vast cemeteries as a piece of history, and as a record of the theological belief of the Roman Christians during the two and a half centuries which immediately followed the Ascension of the Blessed Redeemer. For these painted and carved records date in some instances from the days of the Apostles; they carry on the story of the belief of the Christian community of Rome all through the second and third and the early years of the fourth centuries of our era.

It is intensely interesting. It is even of the greatest importance to us to be enabled thus to catch sight of the Christian tone of mind, of Christian thoughts, hopes and expectations during the long drawn out period of danger and often of bitter persecution—a period which can never be repeated. No written records, however well attested, of this momentous time can be compared with these, for no redactor of a later age has touched them up, corrected them, read into them the thoughts of a later generation. The men of the first, second, and third centuries painted their thoughts on the ceilings and walls of these sacred chambers of their dead, and carved them on the marble and plaster slabs that covered up the graves. Their work remains to this day, though sadly disfigured; and we can there still read the simple, true story of their belief, their faith, their sublime hope.

When any restorer, such as Damasus in the fourth, and the Popes of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, has meddled with and added fresh enrichment to the old works, the hand of the "restorer" is at once plainly visible. The style and execution directly betray the period; no mistake is possible.

We will give a few of the leading features of the story of the paintings and inscriptions which unmistakably belong to the artists of the first three centuries. First and most prominent in all the paintings, in the inscriptions and carvings, is the thought of *Death*. But it is no sombre idea of death—it is death as a friend. Again and again the early Christian artist pictures the spirit of the Christian when released from

the body finding itself in a garden *—the garden of the Blessed. In these gloomy, usually lightless crypts, it seems a strange but exquisite conception, this constant reproduction of the garden imagery. In the cemetery of Domitilla, one of the earliest of the Christian burying places, we find a beautiful representation of a vine mingled with flowers twining over the walls and ceilings.

In these most ancient galleries of Christian art we find a considerable variety of subjects chosen by the artist or sculptor. But there are two figures which appear again and again. They are to be met with in the frescoes which adorn the most ancient sepulchres—sepulchres which must date from Apostolic times; for instance, amidst the charming confusion of vines and flowers of the Domitilla and Lucina cemeteries of the first century. They are reproduced, too, very frequently in the rougher and less artistic paintings of the catacombs of the third century. These are the familiar figures known as the "Orante" and the "Good Shepherd." The name usually given to the first of these tells its story: it is the "praying one." In almost all cases the figure is in the same attitude; the gaze directed upwards, the arms outstretched as though in prayer. The "Orante" is evidently asking God for something, or else thanking God for some mercy already received. In the vast majority of cases the "Orante" is drawn as a female figure, but there are exceptions when the "praying one" is pictured as a man. The attitude of the figure is always the same, only the dress is varied. What now does this favourite figure represent? The Blessed Virgin has been often pressed upon the student as its subject, but absolutely without any solid basis for the hypothesis. The Church has been suggested, but such a vague and impersonal reference

* In Rome the usual expression for the City of the Dead was "Cœmeterium" (cemetery), a sleeping place. In North Africa it was termed "area." This word was also used in some parts of Italy. In many localities, though, the favourite name was "Hortus," a garden. This word we find used at Milan, for instance, and at Salona and other places. We remember the word in the Gospel of S. John: "Now in the place where He was crucified was *a garden*, and in the garden a new tomb." No doubt the favourite appellation of "garden," applied to the resting-place of the dead, is a touching memory of S. John's words.

Photo: Marani, Rome.

AN ORANTE.

From a group of the "Blessed" in the Cemetery of S. Soter (Third Century).

would convey little to the devout mourner or worshipper of the first three centuries. Better far, and in its way more probable and suggestive, is the theory which finds in this well-known figure a symbolical representation of the soul of the dead one lying in the rock-tomb within, praying for Divine help and refreshment in the new and changed condition of existence after death, or else, possibly, interceding as a blessed and pardoned spirit for those still on earth. For we find among the catacomb inscriptions many entreaties for such prayers addressed to the soul of the departed by those left behind still to struggle and to toil on earth; such as, "Live in peace and pray for us"; "May your soul be happy in God; pray for your sister." The "Orante" is pictured in various combinations—now alone, now in the company of the Good Shepherd.

The "Orante" figure as the symbol of the soul of the departed, surviving the art of the very early ages, reappears occasionally in mediæval times, but in a somewhat altered form—as a small and delicate figure emerging from the corpse. A well-known representation of the death of the Blessed Virgin, for instance, shows our Lord standing close by the form of the dead Mother, and holding in His arms, as one would a little child, her soul, robed and crowned under the form of a tiny graceful figure. This was a not uncommon subject for sculpture in wood and stone in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The other figure which we find so often repeated in the catacombs is the gracious form of our Lord, represented as the "Good Shepherd." This may be considered as the favourite picture in the Roman City of the Dead. Innumerable examples occur on the ceilings of the numerous sepulchred chambers leading out of the corridors, on the slabs of marble, stone, and plaster which close up the graves, or as forming the centre of the decorations which encircle the more important tombs.

It belongs, this figure of the Good Shepherd, to no one period, to no special subterranean cemetery, but it is found again and again on the tombs of all catacombs alike of the

first century and of the third. The beautiful and touching figure now appears as the watchful and loving Shepherd tenderly caring for His sheep; now is drawn or carved bearing a sheep wounded or wearied on His shoulders, not unfrequently even with *a goat* in His arms—a particular reminder that "the lost," as men would too often style their brothers and sisters, are still the object of their Master's love and pity. The last is a strangely winning feature of the catacomb teaching.

Included in what may be described as the Pastoral group of sepulchral figures, a group we find so often repeated in one form or other, are sheep and lambs, now feeding close to, now simply gazing at, the Good Shepherd; some seemingly careless, more, however, attentive to the voice and gestures of the Shepherd. The milk-pail found in certain of these pastoral pictures, sometimes standing between the lambs, sometimes borne by them, has been, with great probability, interpreted as a Eucharistic symbol of the heavenly food provided by the Shepherd.

On the slabs of stone or marble or cement which close the graves, where no space exists as in the larger tombs for the figures of the Shepherd or the sheep, or on the decorated ceilings of the sepulchral chambers where the more important graves are found, is often engraved a little palm branch, symbol of the victory over the grave; often also a dove or a pair of doves takes the place of the "Orante," as the symbol of the soul freed from the body. Other symbols of the Faith are graven on many of the slabs, such as a ship at anchor, and especially a Fish in various forms, this last being a mystic representation of the Saviour, of whose titles the initials are the Greek letters* which spell the word *ἰχθύς* (fish). These are some of the more striking and favourite subjects. The catalogue could, however, be greatly enlarged.

The inscriptions carved on the tombs claim a few words even in so brief a study of this important but little known

* Jesus Christ God the Son Saviour.
Ιησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεὸς Υἱὸς Σωτὴρ.

chapter of early Christian history. Besides the name of the departed on many of the slabs covering the graves, we find innumerable simple expressions of love and perfect faith and confidence as to the state of peace and blissful rest enjoyed by the Christian dead, such as "She sleeps"; "Aurelia, our very sweet daughter, refresh thyself among the holy spirits"; "In peace"; "Everlasting rest of happiness"; "Breaking the bonds of the body, he rejoices among the stars"; "Resting well in peace"; "Called away by angels"; "Thou restest in peace, incomparable wife"; "He went to God"; "Be refreshed with the souls of the righteous"; "Thou dost repose for ever from care"; "Pretiosa went to her rest, a handmaid of God and Christ"; "He sleeps but lives"; "To the most sweet and innocent Julia; Her mother hoping"; "The sleeping place of Aurelia Martina"; "She departed, desiring to ascend to the Eternal Light of Heaven"; "Here sleeps in the sleep of peace the sweet and innocent Severianus, whose spirit is received into the light of the Lord"; "Refrain from tears, my sweet daughter and husband; believe that it is forbidden to weep for one who lives in God." These are just a few of the inscriptions gathered almost haphazard; but they seem to show how deep was the spirit of calm joy breathed by these Christians of Rome in the early days; they indicate how general was their intense Faith, their serene hope. Death was, indeed, welcomed in these Christian communities as a friend.

These men and women, when they carved their brief messages of hope and trust upon the graves of their loved dead, never dreamed of handing on to coming generations any special teaching respecting dogma. The voices of the serious disputes which arose after the date of the Peace of the Church (A.D. 313) were not audible here where the Christians of the first ages so often wept and prayed. But from the simple catacomb epitaphs we gather how firmly they held to the great truth of the Godhead of the Redeemer, a truth for which, as we have seen from the *procès verbaux* of the martyrdoms already quoted in this history, they gladly died. We come often upon expressions such as: "In the

Lord God Christ"; "Sacred to the great God Christ"; such an epitaph as: "Mayest thou live in the Holy Spirit," tells us that the Roman Christians taught, too, the belief in the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

On the whole, we gather from studies in the catacombs that the hearts and minds of the disciples of the Lord during those first three centuries were so aflame with love for the Lord Jesus, so filled with His engrossing personality, that there was little place for anyone or anything which did not bear directly upon His Person and His redemptive work. Hence the *comparative* rarity of any pictured representations of the blessed Virgin* and the disciples of the Lord. With these early members of the Church of Rome Christ was all in all. The circumstances of their life, their precarious tenure of that life, the frequent bitter persecutions, the fixed idea that death was, after all, to be earnestly desired, as the entrance to the true life, coloured all their thoughts, and inspired their art—what we have termed "the art of the catacombs." They loved to think of their Lord as the Good Shepherd, and of themselves as His sheep gathered out of the world; and they rejoiced to think of their future eternal home under the imagery of a garden, where the Good Shepherd would welcome and tenderly care for His own.

Very marked was the change in Christian art in the age which immediately followed the Peace and the triumph of the Church in A.D. 313. In the basilicas which speedily arose over or in the immediate neighbourhood of the catacombs after the first victory of the Church under the influence of the Emperor Constantine, the sacred pictures and sculptures were no longer confined to what has been graphically termed the alphabet of early Christian art, the figure of the Good

* The Virgin and Child are delineated in a certain number of instances, but generally with the accompanying figures of the Magi or Wise Men with their offerings; and in these instances the Holy Child is the central figure of the group. But these pictures, after all, are few in number. Certain sacred Hebrew subjects are not unfrequent, such as Daniel in the lions' den; the temptation of Susanna; the trial of the three children in the furnace; Jonah and the great fish; the latter being by far the favourite subject among the *Hebrew* memories, doubtless owing to the reference made to it by our Lord.

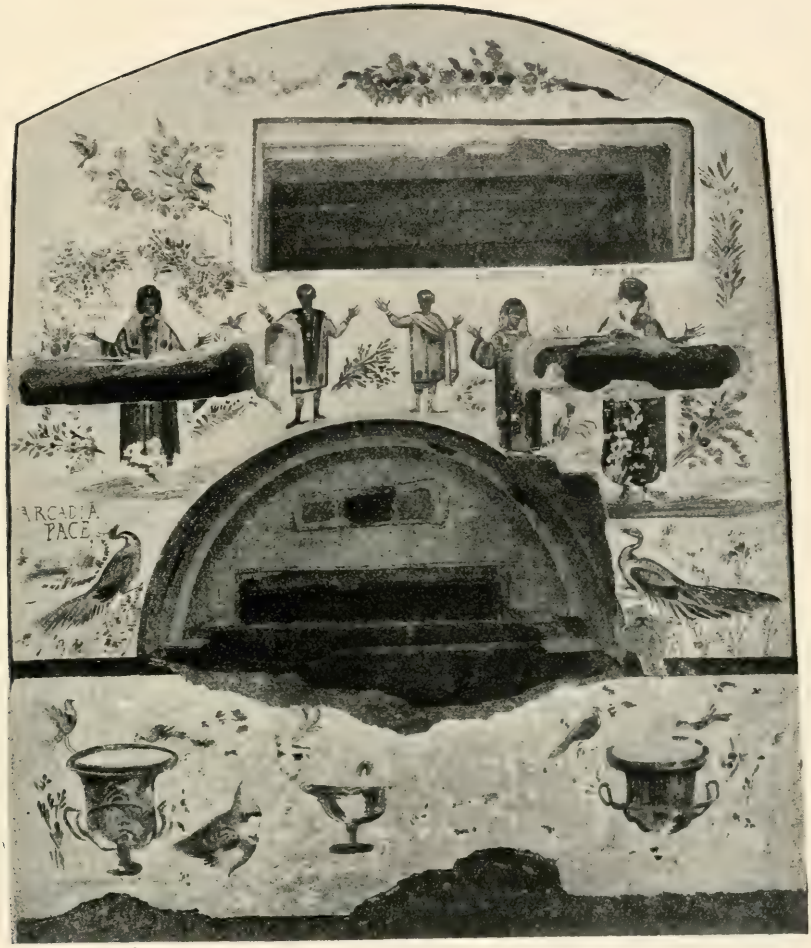


Photo : Mariani, Rome.

GROUP OF THE BLESSED IN PARADISE.

From a Fresco in the Cemetery of S. Soter (Third Century). The tombs are of later date than the Fresco of the "Blessed."

Photo: Alinari & Cook, Rome.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

From a small Marble Statue of the Second or Third Century, now in the Lateran. It has the characteristic features of the oldest type of Catacomb "Shepherd."

Shepherd, the sheep, the lambs, the goats, the quiet garden of the Blessed, the "Orante," the dove, the fish—all these images and symbols in large measure pass out of sight. In the grander paintings, in the rich mosaics produced in the new era of the Church's victory, the visions of the Apocalypse, the mystic revelation of S. John, rather than the Gospel story, supply the imagery. The Good Shepherd is replaced by the noble and gracious figure of the Christ in glory, of the Christ as Judge and King. It is ever the triumphant Christ rather than the Shepherd-Christ who is now depicted. It is the Lamb of the Apocalypse—"the Lamb as it had been slain," the Lamb bearing the Passion marks still; but now represented as crowned with glory and enthroned, adored by all that is greatest and noblest in Heaven as on earth.

CHAPTER XII.

INNER LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

SECTION I.—ROME; HIPPOLYTUS AND CALLISTUS.

After the death of Clement, about the last year of the first century, for nearly a hundred years we hear little of the Church of the Metropolis of the Empire. The shadow, and only the shadow, of the names of its bishops falls upon the page of the historian Eusebius. Even tradition is well-nigh silent as to their life story. Brief mentions are made of a visit of Polycarp in the middle of the century, when the veteran Bishop of Smyrna conferred with Anicetus of Rome, of a residence in Rome of Irenæus, the famous Gallic scholar and writer, subsequently Bishop of Lyons. Of the duration of this visit we know nothing. These scanty references together with the "Acts" of S. Felicitas and her sons, which tell us something of the trials and sufferings of Christians in the days of Marcus, are the best authenticated notices connected with the Church in Rome that we possess. But that the Church in Rome during this period was growing in numbers, was perfecting its organisation, was planning and gradually excavating its mighty City of the Dead beneath the suburbs of the Metropolis, is clear from what we find in contemporary writings, dating from early in the third century.

In the last years of the second century began the famous disputes concerning "church discipline," on which we are about to dwell at some length; disputes which more or less affected the whole of the Catholic Church, and determined in great measure the attitude which the Christian communities everywhere were to assume in their relations with the society

of the Empire. About this time, the close of the second century, the Roman community possessed perhaps the profoundest scholar and thinker in Christendom. This was Hippolytus, generally styled Bishop of Portus.

Hippolytus seriously disagreed with the policy of the Bishop and governing body of the Roman community in the matter of Church discipline; and his opposition here gravely affected that all-important question, daily pressing with greater insistence upon the fast growing body of Christians, of the general relations of Christianity to the society of the Empire. The Roman theologian was supported in his austere views by another writer and teacher of the highest rank in another powerful Christian community. This was Tertullian of Carthage. These two eminent men, the Roman and the African, were by no means alone in their contention respecting the alleged laxity of discipline prevailing in the Church in those days, a laxity which included certain concessions to the Pagan society around them.

The severer and more austere policy of Hippolytus, Tertullian, and their school was finally rejected by the Church of Rome; and the views of Zephyrinus and Callistus, successively Bishops of the Church of the Metropolis, in the end prevailed, and determined generally the attitude of the Catholic Church to the Empire.

But the powerful advocacy of these two eminent dissidents, as contained in their many writings, some of which have come down to us, although it failed to influence the policy of Rome and the majority of the Churches, was by no means thrown away. These men have left their impress upon the Church, and their noble, if at times curiously exaggerated, views have in all ages strongly influenced and coloured the lives of not a few devoted toilers for God.

This section of our history will be devoted to the great dispute which had so far-reaching an influence upon the future of Christianity.

We learn much respecting the inner life of the Church in Rome as it existed in the reign of the Emperor Severus, in the last years of the second and early years of the third

century, from one of those strange "finds" which now and again so marvellously assist the chroniclers of the early days of Christianity.

In the year 1842 an anonymous MS. of the fourteenth century was brought by a learned Greek in the employment of the French Government to Paris from a monastic library on Mount Athos. On examination it was found to contain the continuation of a fragment entitled *Philosophumena*, printed in the Benedictine edition of Origen's works, and generally considered as one of his writings. Certain scholars, however, had already questioned Origen's authorship of the fragment. The University of Oxford printed the newly discovered MS., and it was at once seen to be a literary treasure of rare value. Scholars pronounced it to be, *not* a work of Origen, but a long lost writing of Hippolytus, a famous writer and teacher of the closing years of the second and earlier years of the third century. It was of considerable length, and was divided into ten books, the second and third of which were still missing. Its title was "The Refutation of all Heresies." Books V. and X. are, perhaps, the most important, as a piece of history, and contain an interesting and valuable account of the early heresies, composed by a great scholar, who may be termed a contemporary witness of many of the things about which he was writing. The value of such a testimony can scarcely be over-estimated; for Hippolytus was a well-known and often quoted teacher, and a disciple of Irenæus. The tenth book of the "Refutation" is a summary of the whole work, and contains besides an exposition of the learned writer's own religious opinions. As we have said, Hippolytus and his works were very widely known and highly esteemed in ancient times. To give a few instances out of a long catena of patristic references, Eusebius and Jerome in the fourth century speak of him, Epiphanius (fourth century) in his great work on Heresies largely borrowed from him, and Photius (ninth century) in his marvellous epitome of ancient Greek literature, describes with some detail a yet earlier and shorter work of Hippolytus on heresies. He has been well described as one "who linked together the learning and

tradition of the East, the original home of Christianity with the marvellous practical energy of the West, the scene of his own life's labours . . . He was besides in his time, as far as we know, the most learned man in the Western Church."

For our present work the importance of the comparatively recently discovered writing of the great scholar Hippolytus consists not in his elaborate and learned history of the many heresies more or less connected, though many of them but remotely, with Christianity, but with the strong side-light which his great treatise throws upon the inner life of the Italian Church with which he was especially connected.

He dwells with peculiar insistence upon a bitter feud which apparently raged for some years in the Roman community, and in his description of it he incidentally shows us how far-reaching was the influence of Christianity on Roman society before the second century had yet run its course.

It is, of course, saddening for those who fondly picture to themselves the Church of the first and second centuries as a Church of saints, without spot or wrinkle, to hear of bitter enmities and fierce wranglings in the very centre of her blessed activities; to be compelled slowly and painfully to disentangle the confused threads of the over-coloured narrative of one of the principal disputants. But the truth must be told, and it must be confessed that in the laying of the early storeys of Christianity light ever alternated with darkness. Then, as now, human passions, jealousies, short-sightedness, sadly interfered with the building of the City of God. It was a strange sight indeed, under the very shadow of the sword of persecution which then hung over the Churches of God, ready to fall at any moment! All through this eventful story, the *special* incidents related of this or that individual teacher or confessor, of this or that lonely community—incidents on whose authenticity no shadow of doubt rests —have been only examples or instances of what was taking place in many another Christian centre. So also here, what was taking place on the larger and more prominent stage of Imperial Rome no doubt often took place in less public and notorious

centres. The troubles of Rome, of which Hippolytus tells us were not peculiar to the great Church of the capital.

The story of these Roman dissensions, grievous though they doubtless were to the sorely tried Christian persecuted ones, is very suggestive for us who read it after all these centuries of anxiety and disappointment, of baffled hopes and weary expectations, but on the whole of real progress. First and foremost it reminds us that our Lord and Master has ever worked on earth with poor and often faulty instruments, and yet that these, in the long run, do His work—as then, so now. With no uncertain voice it tells those among us often disappointed and discouraged at the grave cleavages and sharp strifes which still divide Christian folk on earth, which set church against church, communion against communion, family against family, that it was ever so from the very beginning, when the sharp dissension between Paul and Barnabas separated men who had *seen* the Lord, and even *heard* His voice; that it was so in the days of Hippolytus, so near, as we have seen, to the men who had learned their lessons from a Polycarp and a John. And it tells us too, singularly enough, as far as we can judge from the very words of Hippolytus himself, that Hippolytus, the most learned of living Christian teachers, was, on the whole, in the wrong.*

The story of the feud is as follows (we give it from Hippolytus' own narrative, contained in his recently discovered "Refutation of all Heresies," Book IX., Chap. VII.). In the reign of the Emperor Commodus, Marcus' son and successor, there lived in Rome a Christian slave named Callistus. His master was one Carpophorus, also a Christian, and an official in the Imperial palace. Apparently Callistus was an able business man, for Carpophorus entrusted him with money, and set him up in business as a money-changer and banker. In this calling he evidently for a time was successful; for many

* Yet even here modern scholars differ. For instance, Dean Milman of S. Paul's (*Latin Christianity*, Book I., Chap. I.), a generally fair historian, considers Hippolytus was on the whole in the right, and that his adversary Callistus was an ambitious intriguer. This eminent scholar and thinker in this case seems to have lost sight of the great questions upon which this contention was really based, in which Hippolytus was clearly in error.

Christians and others were in the habit of depositing money with him. Then came on a period of difficulty, and Callistus lost all his capital and, fearful of his master's anger, attempted to fly; but was arrested at Portus and brought back to Rome. The angry Carpophorus at once dispatched his unlucky slave to the "pistrinum," or prison where refractory slaves were sent for punishment by their masters. How terrible was the fate of a slave thus punished we learn from a weird description by a contemporary writer, Apuleius. "Ye gods! what men I saw there, their white skin cut about with the lashes of a whip, and marked as if with paint; their gashed backs hung over with the tatters of their jackets, rather than covered; some of them wore only a small girdle round their loins, in all of them their naked body could be seen through their rags. They were branded on their foreheads, their heads were half shorn, on their feet they wore iron rings, their pallor was hideous, their eyelids were as it were eaten away by the smoke and vapour of the dark atmosphere, so that they scarcely had the use of their eyes any more." After a time Carpophorus had him released on the prayer of some pitiful Christian, who persuaded him that some of the lost money could be recovered by Callistus from parties who were in debt to him. These parties were Jews, who, evidently indignant with Callistus when he tried to collect his debts, accused him to the Prefect of the City, alleging that he had made a tumult and had disturbed them in their synagogue. The Prefect, too readily believing any accusation against a Christian, condemned the unhappy Callistus to the unhealthy mines of Sardinia. From these mines he was eventually released, with many other Christian sufferers, owing to the good offices of Marcia, the favourite of Commodus, who was kindly disposed to the Christians—possibly a Christian herself. Callistus then dwelt at Antium, where he was assisted by Victor, who was Bishop of Rome, A.D. 192–202.

This sad tale of slavery, misfortune and suffering is related by Hippolytus, who, it must be remembered, was Callistus' bitter foe. Much, apparently, is omitted, for there was evidently something in the slave's life very striking, something

that marked him out as especially capable and able, more sinned against than sinning; for we find the next Bishop of Rome, Zephyrinus, who succeeded Pope Victor in A.D. 202, sending for Callistus from Antium, and conferring on him high and responsible office in the Christian community of Rome.

Pope Zephyrinus, "to his own great misfortune," writes Hippolytus, appointed Callistus "over the cemetery," and entrusted him besides with the direction and supervision of the Roman clergy. Zephyrinus, too, is depicted by Hippolytus as a man of little education, ignorant of ecclesiastical law, and even covetous. Upon the death of Zephyrinus, Callistus was elected by the clergy Bishop of Rome, A.D. 219. Hippolytus thus curiously writes of the great promotion of the former slave, who had suffered so much and such grievous things in his earlier life: "He believed that on Zephyrinus' death he (Callistus) had attained the goal at which he had aimed." No doubt by his wise administration of the cemetery and the burial of Christians, and by his skill and tact in the direction and supervision of the clergy to which the late Pope had appointed him, he had won the respect and love of at least the majority of the numerous body consisting of presbyters, deacons, and the inferior orders of sub-deacons and others who made up the official ranks of the Roman Church.* Such is the strange and somewhat painful story with which Hippolytus prefaces his account of the grave differences which arose between the newly elected Bishop of Rome, Callistus, and himself. One point more, however, must be briefly touched upon before we dwell upon these differences, the recital of which throws so much light upon the practice and teaching of the Church at the beginning of the third century. What office or position was it which this Hippolytus held in the Catholic Church?

* Dr. Döllinger (*Hippolytus and Callistus*, chaps. ii.–vii.), basing his calculation upon a well-known summary of the number of clergy and church dependants given by Cornelius, A.D. 250. Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi. 43, considers that the organised Church of Rome about this time numbered some fifty thousand souls. This calculation of Cornelius was made some fifteen years after the death of Hippolytus.

He describes himself as "a bishop;" he is also generally so styled by all the ancients who refer to his teachings and writings, as for instance by Eusebius and Jerome. But strange to say no one among the comparatively early writers mentions his diocese. Among the Greek and Oriental Churches a common tradition existed that Hippolytus was Bishop of Rome. But then the earliest Eastern author who can be quoted here wrote at Constantinople *circa* A.D. 582, that is to say late in the sixth century, and Hippolytus lived in the first quarter of the third century. In the seventh and eighth centuries this opinion was apparently a common one in the Eastern Church.

A still more general tradition placed the see of this famous writer at Portus, a harbour situated on the right arm of the Tiber, which eventually superseded the more ancient Ostia as the harbour of Rome, the port of Ostia becoming gradually blocked with sand; but here again the tradition which made him Bishop of Portus is an Oriental one, and does not appear in any writing earlier than *circa* A.D. 630.

The testimony of Eusebius, who wrote much earlier, *circa* A.D. 325, is interesting. Eusebius, who flourished within some eighty years of Hippolytus' death, simply confesses his ignorance. Hippolytus, he says, "was a bishop somewhere or other." Jerome, writing about half a century later than Eusebius, confesses that he has "not been able to find out the city" of which he was bishop. Among eminent modern scholars, Döllinger, at considerable length, argues that he was a schismatical Bishop of Rome, in fact the first anti-Pope. Bishop Lightfoot, with considerable ingenuity, maintained that he never held any definite see, but was simply bishop in charge of the various shifting nationalities represented in the busy Roman harbour of Portus, and was appointed to the charge by Pope Victor, who preceded Zephyrinus in the see of Rome.

The question of the site of his bishoprick, which has been much debated, will probably never be definitely answered now. Rome, however, it is certain was the scene of his activities for many years. This would fit in with either of

the above mentioned hypotheses of the German and the English scholars. Round the complete life story of this great theologian and writer, however, rest clouds of uncertainty and doubt. What is absolutely certain is that during a considerable portion of his life he was the Roman leader of the party of rigorous unbending severity, in open opposition to the policy of the Catholic Church which allowed to Christian converts a certain liberty in their actions, and encouraged them to share, to a considerable extent, in the public life around them. The first friend and patron of Hippolytus was Pope Victor, whose rule was coterminous with the last decade of the second century. Zephyrinus succeeded Victor, and during his reign over the Roman Church of nearly seventeen years Callistus appears to have been his adviser and minister. The approximate dates of the Popes or Bishops of Rome of the period are as follow:

	A.D.
Pope Victor	192
„ Zephyrinus	202
„ Callistus	219
	222
„ Urban	223
„ Pontianus	230
„ Anteros	235
„ Fabianus	236
	250
„ Cornelius	251
„ Lucius	252

During the pontificates of Zephyrinus and Callistus, A.D. 202–222, the deadly feud we are about to speak of raged between the great scholar Hippolytus and the two Popes, largely on questions connected with discipline, although questions on the Trinitarian doctrine also divided them for a time. During the pontificate of Urban, who succeeded Callistus as Bishop of Rome, we hear no more of the feud. It is possible, after the passing away of the two men Zephyrinus and Callistus, that Hippolytus ceased from active opposition to the recognised policy of the Church, and devoted himself exclusively to his scholarly work. This pontificate of Urban,

Photo: Alinari & Cook, Rome.

S. HIPPOLYTUS.

A Marble Statue attributed to the Third Century; found in 1551, much mutilated, and without the head, near the Cemetery of Hippolytus (Rome), a list of whose works is inscribed on the chair. Now in the Lateran.

A.D. 223–230, was a time generally speaking of perfect stillness for the Church. The Emperor Alexander Severus was reigning, and though not a convert himself was ever most favourably disposed to Christianity. In this period Hippolytus, then an old man, put out his most famous works, one of which, the "Refutation of all Heresies," we have been speaking of as lately re-discovered, and which as throwing a flood of light upon the organisation and teaching of this early period has been well described as having laid these latest generations of Christians under the deepest debt of gratitude.*

At length the long, laborious, and troubled life of the great scholar was closed by banishment and death. About the year 230 Urban was succeeded by Pontianus as Bishop of Rome. In A.D. 235 Alexander Severus was murdered, and was succeeded by the Emperor Maximinus, a fierce, rough soldier, who reversed the policy of Alexander Severus, and during his brief tenure of the Imperial power bitterly persecuted the Christians. Pope Pontianus was banished to the unhealthy island of Sardinia. With Pontianus Hippolytus was also sent to the dread Sardinia mines, and there both Pope and scholar, according to some accounts, died very soon. Of the circumstances of their death we know nothing for certain. Their bodies were, however, brought back to Rome. Pope Pontianus was laid in the Papal Crypt, a chamber of the cemetery of Callistus on the Appian Way, and Hippolytus was buried in another Christian cemetery on the Tiburtine Way, not very far from the famous Prætorian Camp, hard by the spot where subsequently arose the great basilica of S. Laurence.

The exact dates are a little confused. An ancient tradition, however, tells us that the two martyrs were deposited in their several resting-places on the self-same day, viz. the Ides of August, A.D. 236, and this traditional date is the one generally accepted.

In the year 1551 a mutilated statue was discovered in the place where originally the sanctuary of Hippolytus had been built. The head of the statue was missing, and there was no name to identify it, but on the back and sides of the

* Bishop Lightfoot, *Clement of Rome*, vol. ii., p. 437.

chair, in which the figure sits, was engraved a list of writings known to have been the works of Hippolytus. On one side of the chair is inscribed a calendar for determining the Paschal full moon. No doubt rests upon the universally received assumption that the statue is a figure of Hippolytus. It is considered to be the oldest marble statue of Christian workmanship, and probably belongs to the first half of the third century. We have no knowledge of any similar mark of respect ever paid to any bishop or eminent teacher in the first few centuries.*

Testimonies from ancient writers to the widespread influence of Hippolytus and his works have been already briefly referred to. After his death he was the recipient for a long period and in various lands of many posthumous honours besides the dignity of saintship in the Church where he laboured for so many years; a dignity which, however, he shares with not a few whose claims to it are perhaps somewhat questionable. Pope Damasus, A.D. 366–384, the great restorer of the Roman sanctuaries, found a small chapel containing the remains of the eminent writer and scholar, which he enlarged and beautified. In the last years of the fourth or very early in the fifth century, the Spanish Christian poet, Prudentius, devoted some two hundred and forty-six lines in his series of fourteen poems in honour of various martyrs (the *Peri Stephanón liber*) exclusively to Hippolytus. But when Prudentius wrote, legendary history had already gathered thickly round the memory of the scholar-martyr, and the details he gives us are quite unreliable. Historically, the only value of Prudentius' poem is to show how magnificently the shrine of Hippolytus was adorned in his, Prudentius', days —end of the fourth century. The cult of the famous teacher was then evidently at its zenith.

In the barbarian raids of the following centuries the shrine and basilica of Hippolytus seems to have suffered severely. Pope Paul I., between A.D. 757 and A.D. 768, amongst other precious relics is said to have translated the remains of

* This celebrated statue is now in a prominent position in the Lateran Museum; the head and upper part, which were mutilated, have been restored.

Hippolytus to the Church of S. Silvestro in Capite (so called from the head of S. John the Baptist, which has ever been its most precious relic*). Curiously enough, another translation of the body of Hippolytus is related to have taken place under Pope Leo IV., A.D. 847–55, to the Church of the Quattro Coronati on the Cœlian; and yet a third translation of the honoured remains under Pope Honorius III., *circa* A.D. 1216, to the neighbouring basilica of S. Laurentius is chronicled in trustworthy records. These stories of successive translations, and of different churches, each possessing the body of the saint, are probably due to the not uncommon practice of calling any limb or portion of the saint "the body"—a custom responsible for not a little confusion in many cases.

These successive mentions of the translation of the remains, or more probably portions of the remains, of Hippolytus, in different ages to important Roman churches by no means exhaust our records of the enduring respect shown by the Catholic Church to the memory of one of the earliest and greatest of her theologians.

In the pontificate of Siricius, A.D. 384–98, another memoria or chapel of the holy martyr Hippolytus is known to have been erected among the buildings of the famous church and monastery of S. Pudentiana. In Portus, the harbour of Rome, with which important maritime centre the name of the great scholar, as we have mentioned already, is closely connected as bishop, the tower of an ancient church bearing his honoured name can still be seen rising above the desolate and lonely Campagna.

Beyond the confines of Italy even we can find traces of the ancient reverence paid to the famous Italian scholar. In Arles, the ancient city of Southern Gaul, there is a church of great antiquity dedicated to him. Nor is this the only relic of the honours shown him in the Gallic province; for in the north, among the sacred treasures of the royal and illustrious abbey of S. Denis, close to Paris, for a long period portions of the body of Hippolytus were venerated under the

* The writer believes that this famous relic of the Baptist has been of late years removed to the Vatican for greater security.

name of S. Bilt. Even in distant Cologne, on the Rhine, the Church of S. Ursula claims to possess other relics.

We are brought into very close touch with this far back time when Hippolytus and Callistus lived, by the recent discoveries of De Rossi in the catacomb named after the latter. It will be remembered that Pope Zephyrinus appointed his friend and adviser Callistus over "the Cemetery." Now we learn from the *Liber Pontificalis* and from various other sources that the earliest successors of S. Peter, with rare exceptions, were laid near the body of the blessed Peter in the Vatican crypt. But very early in the third century a special chamber was prepared, evidently with extraordinary care, by Callistus under the direction of Zephyrinus; and in this sacred chamber a long line of Popes were laid to rest. De Rossi, in the course of his excavations in that catacomb, came upon an exceptional number of "graffiti"* or rough inscriptions carved by early pilgrims to these shrines; and recognised at once that he was on the threshold of a very special sanctuary of the ancient Church. This was the Papal crypt on which for many centuries no eye had looked. It was in a state of utter ruin and disorder; but the remains of beautiful and costly work were there, traces of the reverent care with which several generations of the ancient Church had adorned the sacred chamber. A few partly shattered gravestones found among the ruins and the broken *débris* revealed to the great scholar the cause of this evidently long continued veneration on the part of the pilgrims of early times.

On these scarred and mutilated slabs, each of which had once closed the niche where a body had been laid, De Rossi found the historic names of Popes Anteros and Fabianus, of Lucius and Eutychianus, successively Bishops of Rome. On

* These "graffiti" are little more than rough scribblings of names of these early visitors; sometimes the names are accompanied with a few words of prayer for those they loved best. They fancied, did these pilgrims, that a prayer carved in such a place hard by the sepulchre of a saintly person, such as a martyr, would be peculiarly efficacious. The presence of a number of these ancient pilgrim "graffiti" on the walls is a sure index that a specially hallowed shrine is close by.

Photo : Anderson, Rome.

THE PAPAL CRYPT, AS FIRST DISCOVERED BY DE ROSSI.

Cemetery of S. Callistus (Third Century).

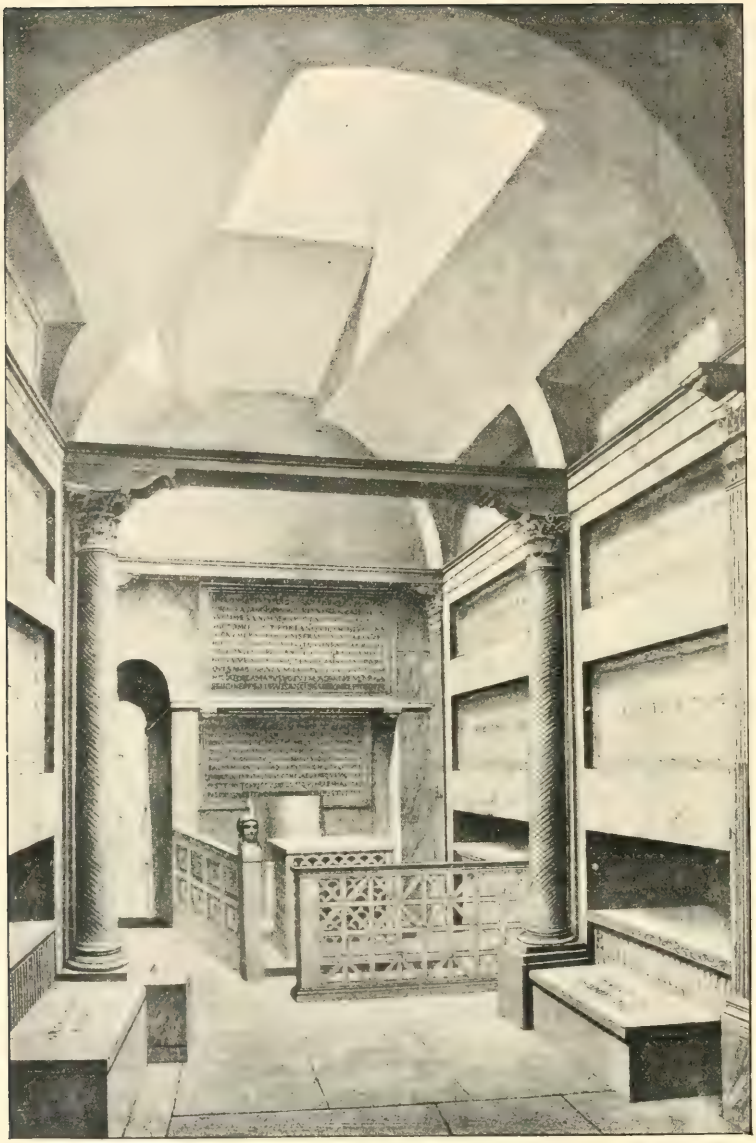


Photo: Mariani, Rome.

THE PAPAL CRYPT

IN THE TIME OF POPE DAMASUS (FOURTH CENTURY).

According to De Rossi's Restoration.

the stones of Anteros, Fabianus, and Eutychianus the title Episcopus (Bishop) followed the name, and the yet prouder title of martyr was added to the name of Fabian. Anteros and Fabianus were contemporaries of Hippolytus. De Rossi has no doubt that these four broken stones were *the original tombstones* of the third century Popes whose names they bear.* In this chamber of undying "memories" it is recorded that Zephyrinus also was buried; not so Callistus, who was interred in a cemetery in the Trastevere quarter, near the spot where he suffered martyrdom in a popular tumult. Urban, who succeeded Callistus, Pontianus, Anteros, Fabianus, Lucius, Eutychianus, and probably others, were all buried in this sacred chamber. The graves of other famous third century Popes have been identified in different parts of the vast subterranean area occupied by the great cemetery or catacomb of the Appian Way.†

The *charges* which Hippolytus brings against the acts of Pope Callistus during his government of the see of Rome are specially important and interesting to the Church historian; for they, as it has been said, give many particulars respecting the inner life of the Christian Church in the first years of the third century.

Within the same decade as Hippolytus, *i.e.* the closing years of the second and the opening years of the third centuries, the brilliant and eloquent Tertullian, at great length and with much detail in his "Apology" and in various other treatises and "studies," covers much of the same ground and makes very similar charges against the current Church policy of the age. Tertullian's pictures, to which we shall presently revert, are drawn from Christian life in Carthage and the wealthy and populous pro-consulate of North Africa. Hippolytus, of course, founds his strictures on the government and management of the Christian Church in his age and time, on his own

* These historical slabs, carefully repaired, have been replaced on the walls of the Papal Crypt.

† Hippolytus, whose body was also brought back to Rome with that of Pontianus, was buried, as we have seen, in another cemetery on the Tiburtine Way, on the same day that Pontianus, also Bishop of Rome, was laid in the Papal Crypt of the cemetery of Callistus.

personal experiences of the great Christian community at Rome and in the immediate neighbourhood of the Imperial city.

One of the leading accusations of Hippolytus charged the Bishop of Rome, Callistus, with being the first who had publicly proclaimed the principle of the possibility of the Church granting absolution of *all* sins, even of the gravest character. The arrangements which Callistus had made on the subject of absolution were evidently not transitory but lasting, as Hippolytus speaks of them as still in force *circa* A.D. 230, some seven years after the Bishop's death.

The question of a reconciliation of sinners with the Church had already been mooted in the Roman community; the predecessor of Callistus, Pope Zephyrinus, having mitigated the original strict penance discipline by declaring that even those who had been guilty of the grave sins of adultery and idolatry might again be admitted to communion after performing public penance. It appears that a further movement in the direction of leniency took place after the Decian persecution, *circa* A.D. 249, and the principle of not shutting out from communion for ever those who had lapsed in the days of trial was admitted.

From letters written from Rome to Cyprian of Carthage, *circa* A.D. 250, we find that the severe discipline of earlier days had been considerably modified, in accordance with the policy so hateful to Hippolytus and Tertullian and the school of the Rigorists. Callistus, however, and in a measure his predecessor and friend, Pope Zephyrinus, were probably the first who publicly urged this; the principle which was eventually endorsed by Cyprian was first formally recognised at Rome, and a hope of re-admission to the Church was held out even to those who had sinned most grievously.

But even before Callistus and the Roman community publicly affirmed the Church's willingness to receive back into her fold grievous sinners if they repented, this milder discipline had found advocates; for we find Dionysius of Corinth, *circa* A.D. 169, writing to Christian communities in Pontus, urging that all who had in any way been regarded as heretical, or had committed any crime whatever, ought to

be received again into the fold if they turned again to the Church, thus gravely condemning the idea of perpetual excommunication.

In this as in other matters, as we shall see, Callistus and the Roman Church adopted a liberal and generous policy, but one which was by no means universally followed; since from the canons of the Council of Elvira (Illiberis), a very important assembly held scarcely eighty years after Callistus' death,* we see that the Spanish Church still held to the principle of perpetual excommunication in the case of certain grievous sins.

Hippolytus further charges Callistus with sanctioning the ordination of men who had been married twice or thrice to the higher ranks among the clergy, including here bishops, priests, and deacons. The words of S. Paul in 1 Tim. iii. 2–12, and Titus i. 6, have been in all ages variously understood. Origen, however, *circa* A.D. 230, writes that it was the rule that a bishop, a presbyter, and a deacon (and he adds a widow, referring, of course, to the "office bearing" widows of 1 Tim. v. 3–10) should not, when ordained, have married a second time. Tertullian's express reference to the custom in the same period tells us that this was generally the ecclesiastical rule. But it is clear from Tertullian's words that exceptions had been not infrequently made, especially in cases where the second marriage had been concluded before baptism.

Dr. Döllinger (*Hippolytus and Callistus*, chap. iii.), in the course of a lengthy dissertation on the disputed question, weightily remarks with reference to these charges brought by Hippolytus and Tertullian against the practice of the Catholic Church of the time, that "the difference was evidently made between second marriages contracted before and after baptism, and that several were made bishops in spite of the double marriages, because it was thought their stain might be overlooked as something belonging to the heathen period of their life." This concession was not, however, recognised by stricter teachers like Hippolytus and Tertullian, the latter of

* The exact date of this Council is disputed. That usually given is 302–3; but the true date is probably a few years earlier.

whom asks contemptuously: "Being a digamist dost thou baptise? Being a digamist dost thou make the offering?" (*De Exhortatione Castitatis*, 7).

But the dispute concerning the propriety of second marriages for the clergy, as time went on, was submerged in the far more important and hotly contested question, Was marriage at all to be sanctioned for the clergy of the Catholic Church?

Outside the recognised paramount importance of the need of guarding pure and unadulterated the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity, the necessity or the non-necessity of insisting on the celibacy of the clergy has perhaps exercised the minds of practical theologians more than any other question in the general administration of the Church. From the early years of the third century, down to our own day and time, the question has agitated and disturbed the Church. Since the period of the Reformation the Western Church has been formally divided on the question. In the Roman Communion the decision of the Council of Trent forbidding sternly *all* clerical marriages is accepted. In the Protestant communities absolute freedom on the point is conceded. Among the last-named there is, besides, no rule, written or implied, existing on the subject of digamy in the case of the clergy.

Hippolytus, the subject of our present study, was the first (Tertullian probably writing a very few years later) who formally inveighed against the principle of clerical marriages. His words are very strong. "Callistus," he says, "ordered that if a cleric married he was to remain among the clergy, *just as if he had committed no offence.*" During the previous century and a half nothing formal apparently was taught on this subject. What little is said in the New Testament distinctly recognises marriage as honourable and legal for all Christians without distinction, for the office-bearer in the Church as well as for the ordinary layman. Alone in that mystic passage in the Apocalypse (Rev. xiv. 4) does any hint appear that a higher excellence in the case of celibates was recognised in the courts of heaven.

In the early Christian writings very little respecting marriage appears, and when any reference is made it is simply to

repeat the New Testament advice (as Hermas, *Comm.* II., iv., 1), or to warn men not to boast of any such austere way of life and thus to exalt themselves above others (see Ignatius in his letter to Polycarp, C. 5).

Again we have in very early times some distinct mentions of bishops and presbyters who were married, *e.g.* by Polycarp (early second century), by Cyprian (first half of second century), by Eusebius, quoting from what happened in the Decian persecution (first half of the third century), and in the Diocletian persecution (some half century later). Clement of Alexandria besides speaks of Peter and Philip, the Apostles, as married.* There is, however, no doubt that very soon an exaggerated esteem for the celibacy of the clergy made its appearance in the Church. This undue reverence for the unmarried state can be largely traced to the teaching of the Gnostics in the second century, and somewhat later to the doctrines of the Montanists. Various decrees of early Councils opposed or attempted to mitigate these ascetic innovations. Of these, the action of the Council of Nice, A.D. 325, is the most memorable. But in spite of these attempts to relieve the clergy of the heavy burden which the sterner and more ascetic teachers, such as Hippolytus and Tertullian, insisted upon imposing upon their brethren, the principle of clerical celibacy in the Western Church steadily gained ground. Again and again in all countries in the West ecclesiastical history is never weary of calling attention to the frequent revolts and numberless evasions on the part of the clergy who would not submit to the harsh law of the Church; but revolt and evasion, though repeated a hundred times, were of no avail. The responsible heads of the Church, with scarcely an exception, followed the lead of Hippolytus and Tertullian; to this long line of noted Church leaders all through the Christian centuries the principle of clerical celibacy was the keystone of the Church's influence and power. The ecclesiastical, or, as it was more generally termed, the sacerdotal, order must know

* Bingham, *Chr. Antiq.*, Book IV., Chap. V., Secs. 4 and 5, enumerates various examples and gives the references.

neither nation nor family. It must be separated from all common human sympathies, interests, affections. It must own no ties or obligations save those of the Catholic Church. It was a grand, even a magnificent, conception, but to those who look on the work of the Catholic Church from a different standpoint it was a conception erroneous and misleading. Towards the end of the eleventh century, in the course of the great revival of religion which belonged to that period, the principle of clerical celibacy was most positively enforced under the authority of the famous Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII.), and from that time until the Reformation of the sixteenth century, was sternly and rigidly required all through the Western Churches. In the East this principle of clerical celibacy was never pressed with the same inflexible rigour, and to this day, while forbidding marriage to her bishops, her changeless Church allows her presbyters to marry.*

Another of Pope Callistus' actions in the matter of Church discipline, which had far-reaching consequences, was strangely enough vehemently complained of and opposed by Hippolytus. The laws of the Roman Empire, it is well known, placed an insurmountable barrier between freemen and slaves, and the marriage laws which forbad any legal union between a free woman and a slave were very stringent. Such marriages, already forbidden by the Julian and Papian law, were declared null and void by the Emperors Marcus and Commodus. Now Callistus granted ecclesiastical sanction to such unions in the case of believers. Hippolytus argued that such Church sanction, that such a granting of the Church's blessing to

* In this necessarily brief sketch of an all-important principle, of which Hippolytus was perhaps the first official exponent, we have not mentioned *Monasticism*, which in the West did not make its appearance for more than a century and a quarter after Hippolytus had passed away, being somewhat earlier in its development in the East. But it was the teaching of Monasticism, which as time went on was gradually wrought into the general feeling, lay and clerical, that rendered possible the enforcement of the stern law of celibacy upon all the official and responsible ministers of religion. Monasticism, it must be remembered, admitted almost to its full extent the Manichean tenet (the child of Gnosticism) of the innate sinfulness of all sexual intercourse as partaking of the *inextinguishable impurity of Matter*.

unequal marriages, was equivalent to an invitation to unchastity. It is difficult to understand by what reasoning the great ascetic teacher came to such a conclusion.* Its effect really was in some measure to break down the walls which existed between slaves and free persons in the Empire. Henceforth in the Roman Empire there existed a vast society in whose ever-increasing ranks freemen and slaves were to be equals. In the society of the Christian Church the highest ecclesiastical offices were now and again conferred upon slaves and freed-men, as was the case with Callistus himself.

It seems from Hippolytus' language that Pope Callistus was the first, certainly the first among Roman bishops, who ruled that the Church's blessing might be given to these marriages between the two classes of slaves and free. The moment when this great movement in the direction of the overthrow of slavery was adopted by the Church, was the time of quietness which set in after Severus' death, when for a considerable period the Church was comparatively free from persecution. That such a startling innovation upon the ancient marriage customs of the Empire was considered desirable and practical by the rulers of the Church is a striking testimony to the rapid progress of the new religion in all ranks of Roman society.

It is from Hippolytus' writings that we derive our knowledge of the earliest developments of the Sabellian and Patripassian heresy, a heresy which grew up at a very early date in the heart of the Catholic Church. In some of the writings of the earliest Fathers, notably in Ignatius, we come upon expressions dealing with the Persons of the ever blessed Trinity which would scarcely have been used in the clear-cut definitions of the theology of the next century, the age of Councils, by men like Athanasius. Some of these expressions were probably, in the first instance, unduly pressed, and hence the strange views which were developed into what is termed Sabellian or Patripassian teaching.

* It is possible that he feared that, where the State recognised no validity in the union and no legitimacy in the offspring, there would be a perpetual inducement to set at naught the ecclesiastical bond.

This widespread form of erroneous doctrine arose in the last years of the second century. Its first public teacher was Noëtus of Smyrna. A disciple of his, one Epigonus, brought the doctrine of Noëtus to Rome in the pontificate of Victor, A.D. 192–202. Alongside of Epigonus, Praxeas, another able teacher of the same school, worked for a time in the metropolis. When Zephyrinus was Pope, A.D. 202–18, Cleomenes, the disciple of Epigonus, was looked upon as the chief of this school of thought in Rome; with Cleomenes the famous Sabellius was associated. This last gave his name to the sect of Sabellians, or Patripassians as they came to be called. Sabellius was by birth a Libyan of the Pentapolis, who had taken up his abode in Rome. Hippolytus gives us a clear description of his curious doctrine. Epiphanius, who died A.D. 403, and Theodoret, who died A.D. 456, both of whom also discuss it, evidently mainly derived their knowledge of this heresy from the great Roman theologian of whom we are speaking. The teaching of this heretical school was as follows:

"The one supreme God is originally, or in so far as He is called Father, invisible, passionless, immortal, uncreate; but on the other side, as Son, by His own will and free self-limitation, He became man, was born of the Virgin, suffered and died, and accordingly is called 'Son' only for a certain time and only in reference to that which He experienced upon earth. The Son, or Christ, is therefore the Father veiled in the flesh, and we must certainly say that it was the Father Himself who became Man and suffered."*

Hippolytus was an uncompromising opponent of this Sabellian teaching, and his fervid refutation led him into some extreme and somewhat exaggerated statements which enabled his enemies, who were many, to accuse him of being ditheistic; that is of teaching erroneously that alongside God there was a second God brought into existence, viz. the Logos or Son. It was really a baseless charge, but the rancour of theological disputes, even at that early date, led men to seek out and to find heresy even in the doctrine of the Church's noblest

* Compare Döllinger, *Hippolytus and Callistus*, Chap. IV., Sec. 1.

teachers. And, indeed, Hippolytus courted such accusations by the bitterness with which he persistently attacked Popes Zephyrinus and Callistus, whom he charged, if not with sharing, at least with sympathising with the errors of Sabellius.

But Pope Callistus we know excommunicated Sabellius as a teacher of false doctrine. There is no doubt that in these early disputes the Catholic Church was on the side of Callistus, and that his teaching and definitions on the subject of the Divine Personality of Christ, in preference to what was advanced by Hippolytus, were maintained in the influential Roman communities. Indeed, from Hippolytus' own work it seems that the teaching of Callistus on this abstruse subject avoided two errors, that of Sabellius on the one side, who confuses the Father with the Son, and the exaggerated expressions of Hippolytus on the other, who while combating the heresy of Sabellius occasionally seems to suggest separation of the Logos from God. It will be useful, however, in this little account of an early theological dispute in the Catholic Church, to see what was the doctrine taught by Popes Zephyrinus and Callistus, which we maintain was the doctrine of the Catholic Church in the first half of the third century, on the subject of the Divine Personality of the second Person of the Trinity. Zephyrinus, advised by Callistus, came publicly before the congregation and made this confession of faith, "I know but one God, Jesus Christ, and besides Him I know no one that was born and has suffered." About fifty years later the confession of Pionius and the martyrs of Smyrna in the Decian persecution (*circa* A.D. 250) was to the same effect. We will give the words of these famous confessors from the "Acts" of their martyrdom.* Pionius and his companions being asked, "Whom do you worship as God?" replied, "The omnipotent God who made heaven and earth, and all that they contain, whom we know through His Word Jesus Christ." Then when Asclepiades, one of Pionius' companions, was interrogated, "Whom do you worship

* The "Acts" of Pionius of Smyrna, and his companions, *circa* A.D. 250, is considered an historical document of the highest value. (So Bishop Lightfoot and Allard.)

as God?" he answered, "Christ." The judge then said, "What, then, is that another?" "No," said Asclepiades, "It is the same whom they (his companions) had confessed a little while before." When they were interrogated again at the altar of the heathen deities and again confessed that they believed in the God who made the world, the judges asked, "Are you speaking of Him who was crucified?" Pionius replied, "I speak of Him whom the Father sent for the salvation of the world."

It was thus that the Church of Rome which, to use Döllinger's words, "by its superior grandeur, antiquity, and dignity formed the centre of the whole Christian world, to which all directed their eyes, with which all held communion and intercourse," without, however, asserting* any special claim to enforce obedience from other Churches, slowly formulated the great doctrinal definitions of the Divine Personality of Christ, which in the next century, the age of great councils, were expressed in the great Catholic creeds and expounded in treatises by Catholic theologians such as Athanasius.

To sum up, Hippolytus, the learned Roman theologian, in the first instance, argued against and combated the Sabellian errors. In his zeal to refute what was undoubtedly false teaching he went into the other extreme, and the Popes Zephyrinus and Callistus, viewing his definitions as dangerous, corrected them; and their exposition of the doctrines of the Divine Personality of the Son, adopted by the Roman Church, was virtually identical with the language used by prominent martyrs of the Faith, such as Pionius of Smyrna and his companions about fifty years later.

The comparative reticence we have before noticed in early Christian theology in the matter of the Divine Personality of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is very marked in the works of Hippolytus. This great scholar and divine, who taught in Rome roughly from A.D. 190–230, gives to this article of faith exactly the same kind of testimony as did

* The haughty claim of Stephen, Bishop of Rome, to a general supremacy in his controversy with Cyprian of Carthage, was advanced about half a century later.

the yet earlier Christian writers. They bear witness to its truth, but at the same time they dwell but little upon it. Now Hippolytus has been charged by students of his earlier long-known writings with ascribing no Personality to the Holy Spirit; and the newly discovered great work we have been speaking of apparently bears out this contention, for no mention of the Holy Spirit occurs in the summary of doctrine in his Tenth Book. Still that Hippolytus *did* hold and teach the Divine Personality of the Third Person is clear from a passage in his treatise against Noëtus of Smyrna, one of the reputed founders of the Patripassian heresy. These words are clear and most definite, and run as follows: "By means of the incarnate Logos we recognise the Father, we believe in the Son, and we adore the Holy Ghost." And again he writes: "The Father has put all things under Christ, excepting Himself and the Holy Spirit."

SECTION II.—CARTHAGE: TERTULLIAN.

THANKS to the discovery of the writing of Hippolytus, we have learned much of the inner life and activities of the Church in the Metropolis of the Empire *circa* A.D. 200–225. We possess for the same time ample testimony to the influence and work of Christianity in another part of the Empire in the teaching of a powerful Christian writer of the great province of pro-consular Africa.

At this period internal dissensions and controversies, similar to those which, as we have learned from Hippolytus, were then agitating the congregations of Rome and central Italy, were also disturbing the peace of the Carthaginian and North African communities.

There were evidently in the teeming, busy Christian life of the early years of the third century two parties fiercely contending for their own special views of government, of organisation, and of discipline—Rome and Carthage, those great centres of population, being no doubt representative Churches. What was going on in these capitals of Italy and North Africa, on a smaller scale was going on in Lyons and

Ephesus, in Antioch and Alexandria. We will here speak in some detail of Tertullian's evidence, not only ample and varied, but provided by a great scholar and a conspicuously earnest and able man. When we have summarised some of his testimony we will endeavour to show how it came about that these grave disputes on Christian discipline and organisation arose at this particular juncture.

Tertullian has been accurately described as the contemporary of Hippolytus. Born somewhere about the middle of the second century in North Africa, in his early years he was trained as a Pagan, and for some time appears to have been active and even conspicuous as a jurist at Rome. The date of his conversion to Christianity is uncertain. But it seems probable that the turning point in his career can be dated between A.D. 190 and 195. In A.D. 197 we find him settled at Carthage, where he became a presbyter of the Church. His literary activity as a Christian writer and teacher lay mainly between A.D. 197 and A.D. 230 or thereabouts. In A.D. 202–3 he became persuaded that the Montanistic preaching in Phrygia was the work of God, and from this date more or less his teaching and writings were coloured with some of the Montanistic errors. His strong bias in favour of an extreme asceticism to be observed by earnest Christians no doubt largely influenced his subsequent advocacy of those Montanistic doctrines whose austerity was their central feature.

He was a writer of rare originality and genius, a keen observer, a vivid word-painter, but often passionate and exaggerated in his exhortations and rebukes. He ranks among Christian scholars as a profound scholar and thinker, an indefatigable and laborious student, gifted with splendid eloquence and intense earnestness. It may well be conceived that, in spite of his grave errors and mistakes, his influence upon the Church life of his day and time was enormous. His style has been picturesquely described, and with some justice, as "Dark and resplendent as ebony"; and "in some respects," it is added, "his life and work had something in common with that of the Apostle S. Paul."

Evidently the same feeling was working in Tertullian at Carthage as actuated Hippolytus in Rome; a persuasion that the Church in the persons of its responsible leaders had left its first love, and was sanctioning a more lax and easy way of living than had been set forth as the pattern life by the Apostles and the teachers of the first hundred years of the existence of Christianity as a religion and a life.

Many of the very same innovations in discipline and conduct which Hippolytus tells us had been introduced in the course of the pontificate of Zephyrinus at Rome under the influence of his adviser Callistus, we find more or less dwelt upon, only with increased elaboration of detail, by the Carthaginian teacher.

But it is the hard and austere way of life which Tertullian and his school prescribed as the only way which a Christian ought to tread which especially calls for mention here. The aspect of Christian society was very different when Tertullian and Hippolytus taught to what it had been a hundred years before when Ignatius lived and suffered, when a Polycarp ruled the Church in Smyrna, and an Irenæus as a young man listened to his words.

The Christian communities in important cities were no longer largely made up of the poor or small traders, of freed-men and of slaves, with a sprinkling of the nobility, and with perhaps here and there a wealthy patrician and a senator. Such humble folk could well busy themselves in their modest avocations, could live as it were in retirement, could separate themselves from public rejoicings in which idolatrous ceremonies were largely mixed up, could keep aloof from municipal and public affairs. But as the second century wore on the communities began to include in their roll of members all sorts and conditions of men, from the lowest to the highest. Tertullian's own memorable statement, already quoted, was no mere piece of rhetoric, but told a plain fact. "We (Christians) fill the cities, the houses, the fortresses . . . the Senate and the Forum, the palace of the Prince, we are found among the municipalities, among the civil servants of the State, in the very camps of the armies."

New ideals must surely be set forth, new rules for the Christian life, a different code of restrictions must be laid down, for such a wide-spread society as that which Tertullian so vividly portrayed. What were all these Christians to do amidst such environments? How were they to conduct themselves in the Senate, in the palace of the Cæsars, in the Forum where laws were administered, in the municipal councils where the affairs of the City were discussed and arranged?

It was especially in all public and municipal business, so largely and generally shared in by the Romans of the Empire in the provincial cities as well as in the metropolis, that these difficult questions came painfully to the front. It was in all the acts of official life that the Christian was so sorely tried. The old Roman religion was apparently inextricably mixed up with public business, and Roman religion of course meant idolatry. The magistrates were perpetually bound to offer sacrifices, to invoke the aid of the invisible gods, to be present at ceremonies in which the worship of the genius of the Emperor and one or other of the national deities formed a regular and necessary part of the ceremonial. And the revival of Paganism under the Empire, dating from the days of the great Augustus, accentuated this idol-worship, this perpetual association of religious ceremonies with all state and official proceedings. In the second century Christians largely stood aloof for these reasons from all public duties and all public services.

We have seen already how conspicuously loyal to the Emperor and the Government were the followers of Jesus. By word and act they were the most obedient, the most submissive of subjects. They prayed constantly for the Cæsar, in the closet as in their assemblies for divine worship; they obeyed without murmur the regulations and ordinances of his government. They were never numbered among the frequent turbulent disturbers of the established rule; indeed they regarded the majesty of the Empire as the surest earthly guarantee of public peace and security. In the frequent revolts in the provinces no Christian ever took part. Among the followers of the various pretenders to

Imperial rank who from time to time arose in different parts of the Empire no Christian was ever found. In the authentic *procès verbaux* of the trials of accused Christians, in the Acts and Passions of the Martyrs which are accepted as genuine and undoubted pieces, very rarely if ever is a disloyal word reported to have been uttered by the Christian sufferers in the course of the harsh and often cruel interrogatory. Only one charge which seemed to touch the fringe of disloyalty to the State could not be answered. There is no doubt but that the followers of Jesus of Nazareth for a considerable period shrank from any sharing in public duties, Imperial and municipal. This abstention was a well-known accusation often thrown in the teeth of the Christian Romans, and one that could not be easily refuted. They were reproached with being a *useless* folk, taking no part nor share in any public business. How could they—as such a sharing involved idolatry in a hundred forms! It was a common term used for them, "the useless folk," an ingenious play upon their name of Christian ἄχρηστοι (Achrestoi) or the Useless Ones.

And as time went on the grave difficulty increased with their numbers, and the higher social position of the converts. As the third century dawned a climax was reached, and the chiefs of the Christian sect had to face and to solve a formidable problem.

Two parties seemed to have been formed, each adopting a different policy, the one endeavouring to make it easier for the follower of Jesus to bear his part in the ordinary life of a citizen, the other uncompromising, stern, harsh, refusing to make any allowances, rigidly rejecting any idea of compromise. Men like Zephyrinus, the Bishop of Rome, A.D. 202–219, and Callistus, his minister and subsequently his successor, A.D. 219–223, seem to have represented the party of moderation and compromise. Hippolytus of Rome and Tertullian of Carthage are types of the more stern and unbending teachers, who pressed upon Christians the duty of a complete and total separation from the ways and pursuits of ordinary public and civic life.

We have spoken of Hippolytus. From Tertullian, however, we can gather still more of the teaching of these uncompromising and in many respects unpractical Christians. He deals with well-nigh all classes of citizens and their occupations, dwelling with some detail upon arts and crafts. Especially in his treatise on "Idolatry," he naturally inveighs against the artists who fashioned the idols. But in his invective he travels beyond the mere fabrication of the images directly designed for worship in the temples and shrines, and condemns all the ornaments and adornments intended for the houses of the rich, if in any way they were connected with the stories and legends of the gods. The artists and architects, the very workmen in their service, are all included in his sweeping condemnation. No true Christian could be included in their numerous class, for fear lest any of their handiwork should be connected with subjects bearing upon the popular idolatrous mythology of the Empire. But the stern purist, not content with his charge to avoid the popular arts and crafts, condemns all commerce, all trading, based as he conceived it to be upon greed and covetousness. He goes further still in his rigorous catalogue of unlawful ways of life. The office of a teacher in a public school is one that no Christian ought to hold. Such a teacher in the course of his instruction will be compelled to expound to the young the fables of the gods of Rome, the attributes of the deities, their genealogies, and their supposed powers. Curiously enough in another writing he suffers the young to frequent these public schools, though he forbids the Christian to take any part in the instruction supplied there.

On the question of amusements he is most severe. The passion of the Roman of the Empire for games is well known. The theatre, the circus, the gladiatorial games, entered into the life of all classes and orders. No follower of Jesus must be seen at any such exhibition. All are alike forbidden. In the tract *De Spectaculis* he tells with great force the story of an exorcist commanding an unclean spirit to quit the body of a believer, and asking the demon how he dared enter into the body of a servant of God. The evil spirit

replied, "I found the servant of God in my own home," *i.e.* in the theatre.

A yet graver point was decided by this representative teacher of the purist Christian school of the early years of the third century. He discusses whether it were possible for a Christian man to undertake any public function or office connected with the State, and replies: "Yes, it would be possible to accept a magistracy if this could be done without offering sacrifices, or having anything to do with the temples of the gods; such a position might be accepted if it did not besides involve condemning accused citizens to prison and to torture." On the whole Tertullian emphatically decided against the possibility of a true Christian assuming the responsibilities of a public functionary.*

Among the stern precepts put out by the extreme school, of which we are speaking, among these forbidden ways of life so eloquently denounced by the great master Tertullian, it will be especially interesting to see what he says of the soldier's career. Could a Christian serve in the army of which Rome was so proud, whose splendid successes had won her the sovereignty of the largest part of the then known world, whose discipline and courage continued to expand and protect her enormous frontiers? Here, again, Tertullian's warning words addressed to that influential section of the Church of which he was the most distinguished teacher, incidentally tell us how widespread was the Christian sect at the beginning of the third century. The Roman army, *circa* A.D. 200, was full of Christians, "We are of yesterday, and we have filled . . . your camps." "Along with you we fight" (*Apol.* 37, 42). The opening section of the famous treatise *De Coronâ* incidentally implies how very numerous were the Christian soldiers serving in the third or Augustan Legion.

Were all these Christian soldiers of Rome in the wrong? Was military duty incompatible with the Christian profession? Tertullian decides that such a way of life was wrong for a

* This is well summed up in his words: "Nobis nulla res magis aliena quam publica" ("There is nothing that can be conceived more alien to a Christian than being involved in public duties").—*Apologia*, 38.

Christian; but his words here are less violent than the expressions he uses when he inveighs against other pursuits which he considered were unlawful for the followers of Jesus. "Shall it," he says, "be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaimed that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law?" (*De Coronâ*, 11).

But here again the opinion of the Catholic Church was against the rigorous school whose opinions Tertullian voiced. As a whole the Church of the third century leaned upon the temperate words of John the Baptist, speaking to the soldiers of Rome (S. Luke iii. 14). It referred to the favourable judgment passed upon the centurions of the great army (S. Luke vii. 1, 10, and Acts, Chapter x.), and it remembered the general kindly mentions of soldiers in the Gospels and Acts, and so never discouraged Christian men from following the standards of the Empire.

In times of persecution Tertullian expresses very strongly what in the eyes of his school was the duty of Christians—anything like evasion, concealment or flight he considered argued culpable weakness. But, on the other hand, the policy of the Church largely discouraged everything which could be construed as bravado, or useless exposure on the part of believers. Indeed, in certain cases money was given by individuals to the police authorities with a view of staying persecutions. Such acts were most strongly deprecated and condemned by Tertullian's school, to whom, indeed, martyrdom was rather to be courted than shunned.

Thus complete separation on the part of the Christian communities was urgently pressed by the extreme school of Christian thought. To carry into effect their rigorous precepts everything must be given up; if necessary, poverty must be accepted, rank and position forfeited. Even the customary public courtesies must be abandoned; when, for instance, a frontier victory of the Emperor and the army, in one of the perpetual wars which were being waged by the Empire, was announced in Rome or in a provincial city, it was the custom

to illuminate and to adorn the houses with flowers. No Christian must share in this seemingly innocent courtesy to the Sovereign and his legionaries, for such simple rejoicings would seem to imply a homage to the gods of Rome. Thus the gulf between the Christian subject of Rome and the ordinary citizen would be constantly widened, and the ill-feeling with which the votaries of the religion of Jesus were generally regarded among the populace would be constantly deepened.

Counsels of moderation, such as S. Paul gave in such writings as 1 Cor. viii., were explained away. Examples such as Daniel and Joseph in the Old Testament history, who lived without giving offence in a court where idol-rites formed part of the State ceremonies, were set aside. The separation must be complete.

In the family life, in public life, in trade and commerce, no *modus vivendi* was possible in the eyes of this stern and rigorous school, which asserted itself so powerfully in the early years of the third century. "Fast," wrote the great rhetorician in his fiery zeal, "because fasting will train your body for martyrdom, your skin will be strengthened to bear the iron nails; when your blood is well-nigh exhausted you will bleed the less beneath the scourge." "Dread," so he apostrophised the Christian women, "marriage and maternity; how will children profit you, since you must leave them as you go to the executioner, since their longing and your prayer must be that God should take them soon to Himself?" And again, "Accustom your limbs rather to fetters than to bracelets of gold: on that neck of yours now encircled with chains of pearls and emeralds, leave a spot where the sword of the lictor can fall. The age for Christians is no golden age. The robes which the angels are bringing you, remember, are the robes of martyrdom."* Life, in the eyes of these grave ascetic teachers, was coloured by the thought of a bitter persecution ever close at hand. And persecution to these zealots seemed always to be desired rather than to be dreaded.

* See the treatises of Tertullian, *De Jejunis*, 12: and *Ad Uxorem*, 1, 5; *De Cultu Feminarum*, 11, 13. In these quotations the paraphrase of Champagny (*Les Antonins*, viii.) has been mainly followed.

But wiser and more temperate counsels on the whole prevailed in the Church. At Rome the policy of the community, guided by such bishops and teachers as Zephyrinus and Callistus, tended to bridge over the chasm which yawned between the Christians and the Empire; and the circumstances of the time which we shall presently consider, aided them in their endeavours. The policy of the rigorous school of such earnest and devoted though fanatical men as Hippolytus and Tertullian found no place in the teaching of the Catholic Church. A little later, but before the middle of the century (the third), we find such a great and revered bishop as Cyprian of Carthage even withdrawing himself for a season from the scene of danger; although when he judged that the time was come when an example of fearless courage was needed, he returned to his post of danger and duty, in the full consciousness that such a return in his case involved certain death.

And it will be seen on careful examination that the circumstances of the time were peculiarly favourable for the development of the policy of the *moderate* Christian leaders who in good earnest sought for a possible *modus vivendi* for Christians in the Empire; for the party of common sense who longed for an opportunity of doing their duty to the State as well as to God. These teachers wished to see their flock good patriots as well as good Christians. No fundamental principle, of course, must be given up, no real concession to idolatry must be made; but, on the other hand, no rash protests must be advanced, no impossible exclusiveness must be claimed. Where it was possible, the common life of ordinary citizens must be shared in, and the common duties of citizenship must be discharged by the followers of the Crucified.

For the first and second centuries such a rule of life was impossible. During this period a well-nigh ceaseless persecution of Christians was maintained by the Government. Up to the time of Nero the Church grew up in silence and in profound obscurity. From A.D. 64, the date of the cruel Neronic persecution, for well-nigh one hundred and thirty years, the attitude of the Government towards the Christian was one of

persistent hostility. During these years there was never any real cessation of persecution. In some part or other of the Empire it was ever raging; over the votaries of the proscribed religion the sword was ever hanging suspended. The first considerable interval of general stillness was enjoyed by Christians from the middle of the reign of Commodus to the middle of the reign of Severus, roughly from A.D. 186 to A.D. 202, some sixteen years. Then in A.D. 202 bitter persecution began again, raging for some nine years, more or less in all parts of the Empire. When Severus died in A.D. 211, a long time of stillness set in, and for some twenty-four years the Christians enjoyed general immunity from all harrying; indeed, they were treated even with favour. Then the Emperor Maximinus reigned between two and three years, which were again a period of unrest and persecution. Then after another twelve years of stillness a terrible reaction set in—the reaction which Christian annalists paint in lurid characters under the well-known name of the Decian persecution. Decius was Emperor from A.D. 249 to A.D. 251. This *résumé* of the periods alternating between persecution and stillness brings us to the middle of the third century.

Thus it will be seen between A.D. 186 and A.D. 249 the Christians lived for well-nigh fifty-two out of those sixty-three years comparatively unmolested; often, indeed, as we have said looked upon with some favour. In the *earlier* years of the first Severus (A.D. 193–211) there were Christians not only in the Imperial palace, but also in the Senate; and during the reign of Alexander Severus (A.D. 222–235) the Imperial household was largely composed of Christians. The instructions of the great Alexandrian teacher Origen were welcomed by persons of the highest importance in Rome as in the provinces. The Emperor Philip (A.D. 244–249) was even said to have been baptised into the Faith, and in these quiet years many public functionaries were openly Christians.

Encouraged by these periods of quiet, periods which now and again showed signs of even something more than toleration, the responsible leaders of the Catholic Church, seeing in this changed aspect of public feeling towards Christianity "the

finger of God"* sought how they could in lawful matters promote the growth of this kindlier disposition towards them displayed by the State.

Severus (A.D. 193–211), some time before the close of the second century, published a law enabling the Jews to hold the office of decurion without taking part in any of those sacred functions which belonged to the ceremonial department of the municipal office in question if such sacred functions were repugnant to the principles of their Faith. Now there is no certain proof, it is true, of the promulgation of a law setting forth such a formal exemption in the case of the Christians, but it is clear that such an exemption practically did tacitly exist, and that in the third century, in such periods of marked stillness as characterised the reigns of Alexander Severus and of Philip, and the earlier years of the Emperor Valerian, the Christian believers might hold offices connected with the Imperial court, or occupy magistracies and appointments belonging to municipalities, without being compelled to share in any public function of an idolatrous character. It must be remembered, moreover, that these periods of stillness for the Christian population of the Empire occupied considerably more than half of the third century. Origen's† testimony is very decisive here when he speaks of Christians not avoiding or shirking the common public duties of life. Tertullian's words recently quoted, although rhetorical, are to the same effect.

But the third century was no golden age for Christians, although they enjoyed long periods of comparative immunity from harassing persecution. We have already computed that during at least twenty-five years bitter persecution raged. This was continued, though not throughout the whole Empire, during some ten or eleven years of the fourth century, while the final period of the war of Paganism against its victorious adversary,‡ which lasted some fourteen or fifteen years, and

* "Origen, for instance, refers to these periods of cessation of all persecution as owing to the direct interposition of God (*Contra Celsum*, iii. viii.); God thus preventing the utter destruction of the Christian people.

† Origen's *Contra Celsum*, viii. 75.

‡ In the earlier years the persecution was mainly confined to the army.

is generally known as the Diocletian persecution, claimed perhaps more victims than had any of the previous onslaughts. It was the final attack, but it was at the same time the most determined and terrible.

It seems strange that these fierce persecutions should have arisen in an age which had witnessed long periods of stillness, showing that there was a possibility of the Pagan Empire and Christianity existing, so to speak, alongside one another, so long as a spirit of mutual forbearance existed, so long as a wise toleration was displayed by the Imperial government of a religion whose professors again and again had shown themselves the most loyal and peaceful of subjects and citizens.

But the truth was, Paganism was stronger as a creed than later generations have believed. Superstition wide-spread and deeply rooted lived on in quarters where it is difficult to credit its existence. In the age of the Antonines we have seen that the best and wisest among the Romans seem firmly to have believed in dreams, in oracles, in soothsayers, in diviners, in all the strange and curious mechanism, so to speak, of the Pagan system. It is scarcely possible to doubt that the wisest and best of the Pagan sovereigns, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, was a firm believer in these strange mysteries of an old and dying religion, and was superstitious to an extreme degree. And if Marcus was an earnest believer in these things, it is surely not difficult to understand that men far inferior to him in ability and learning were in their day slaves to the same curious and deep-rooted superstitions. We have to remember that it was an adept in the occult sciences who persuaded the Emperor Valerian in the middle of the third century to proscribe once more the worshippers of Christ, while the awful persecution of Diocletian in the first years of the fourth century was the result of the pleadings of the men who inspected the sacred victims offered at the shrines of the ancient deities of Rome.

With this spirit of superstition still living in the Empire, ready ever to break out into open action, it is not difficult

to account for the sudden outbreaks of a fierce persecution, which we shall meet with now and again in the last hundred and thirteen years of our thrilling story.

In close connection with these troubles in the inner life of the Church of Rome, and in some measure of the Church of Carthage also, troubles which were doubtless not peculiar to these two most important centres, was a heresy which threatened to divide the Church into two opposing camps at a most critical period of her history—viz. *circa* A.D. 177—A.D. 220—when struggling Christianity was carrying on a life and death contest with Paganism. This heresy was named Montanism, after its founder, the Phrygian Montanus.

The troubles which, as we have seen, so gravely disturbed the Church of Rome were very real; they arrayed profound scholars and theologians of blameless life and of the highest reputation, such as Hippolytus and Tertullian, against experienced prelates like Zephyrinus and Callistus of Rome, who were supported by all the organisation and power, and, if we may use the later expression, by the public opinion of the Catholic Church.

These troubles arose from the changed conditions, notably from the numbers and social position of the Christians, who were now largely recruited from those classes which would naturally participate freely in public life. Hence the problem: Were Christians to "come out from the world," to aim at the formation of a little society of exclusive religious devotees, or were they to go on to a world-wide mission by more or less adapting themselves to Roman society, its ways, its laws, its customs?

Now the Church, face to face with this new and changed position, chose the second alternative: to use the graphic language of a modern scholar, "She marched through the open door into the Roman State, and settled down there for a long career of activity, determining to Christianise the State along all its thoroughfares by imparting to it the word of the Gospel, but at the same time leaving it everything except its gods." But to do this the Church in some way had to abandon its old discipline and primitive severity, its

ancient apostolic simplicity. And although the Christian community and its responsible rulers adopted this altered policy there were in its midst not a few "holy men of heart," devout scholars and deep theologians, who resented bitterly the change of policy, and with all their power opposed it and set themselves against it. This we have seen in Rome when Hippolytus preached and wrote against the movement, which he, and men who thought like him, deemed secular, retrograde, or, to use a modern term, opportunist; and in Carthage we have sketched the working of a similar movement, where Tertullian, with yet greater vehemence and ability, protested against this laxer teaching and practice. The contest between the men who mourned over the decadence of primitive Christianity, and the men of the new school, was being carried on fiercely at Rome and Carthage as the second century was expiring, and was continued in the first decades of the third.

A good many years before these dates there had arisen in the western districts of pro-consular Asia, in the province of Phrygia, a sect of Christians urging a more exacting standard of moral obligations than was beginning to be observed in the Catholic Church, especially with regard to marriage, fasting, and martyrdom; and at the same time, in the person of its founder, Montanus, advancing strange claims to the possession of a special prophetic inspiration, in the sense in which prophecy was understood in apostolic days. The headquarters of the sect were the small and little known Phrygian towns of Pepuza and Tymion. Besides Montanus himself, only two women named Prisca and Maximilla seem ever to have asserted that they were endowed with prophetic gifts. They professed to utter the direct commands of the Holy Spirit, and the principal burden of their revelation was the necessity of a more strict and holy life. Montanus appeared on the scene about the year 156, when Antoninus Pius was reigning; but for some twenty years his movement was confined to Phrygia and the neighbouring districts.

After A.D. 177 Montanism, as it was called from its founder, began to spread over a much wider area, and atten-

tion became gradually attracted to its claims and to its teaching. There is no doubt that the urgency with which the Montanists preached the imperative duty of a severer life won to their ranks in different countries many earnest souls who were utterly dissatisfied with the laxer discipline of the Catholic Church, and disapproved of the new policy which was gradually being adopted by the Church of Rome and other great communities. It was the ascetic preaching of the Montanists which at first won them adherents rather than their peculiar belief in a new and special outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand the strange and novel doctrine concerning a special and fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Montanus and his two female friends no doubt seriously weakened the cause of the rigorists—the party which set itself to oppose what they deemed the secularisation of the Church—by causing their views to be associated with the Montanist heresy. There was, in fact, no necessary connection. Hippolytus, for instance, one of the most earnest of those who set themselves to denounce the new departure in Church policy, in his famous work "On Heresies," speaks with profound contempt of Prisca and Maximilla, the Montanistic prophetesses, whom, as he said, the Montanists magnified as above the Apostles; and he terms the majority of their books as foolish, and their arguments as worthy of no consideration ("Refutation," Book VIII. 12, and X. 21). Tertullian, indeed, adopted the full teaching of Montanism far on in his career as a teacher, but only when he found that the chasm was broadening every day between the old Christianity to which his soul clung, with its primitive severity, its resolute refusal to share in anything connected with the life so inextricably mixed up with the Pagan associations around, and the new Christianity which more or less accommodated itself to the life of the Empire.

The Catholic Church, however, as a Church, unswervingly opposed Montanism. Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis, an eminent theologian and a voluminous writer of Asia Minor

in the last quarter of the second century, wrote strongly condemning their errors. Indeed, the universal acceptance by the Catholic Church of the canon of the New Testament before the close of the second century, an acceptance which rigorously excluded all other writings from the inspired volume, was sufficient to brand as a deadly heresy any teaching respecting a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, no hint of which appears in the inspired pages.

But, as we have remarked, Montanism for a comparatively brief period was a power chiefly in consequence of its protest against what may be regarded as secularism in the Church, a departure from the old paths of primitive Christianity. Besides its influence in Asia Minor and Africa, in Gaul, too, it evidently had made a lodgment. This much we learn from the sympathetic letter addressed to Eleutherus (Bishop of Rome, A.D. 176 to A.D. 192) by the Gallican confessors, who, without expressing a definite opinion as to the truth of the Montanistic claims, yet considered that communion should be maintained with the Asian zealots.*

In Rome, at one time late in the second century, according to Tertullian, there was clearly a disposition in the official Church, if not to recognise the claims of Montanism, at least to consider them favourably. Praxeas, however, who is charged with introducing from Asia the Sabellian heresy respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, succeeded in inducing the Roman bishop to withhold his letters of conciliation to the churches of Asia and Phrygia on the question. The expressions of the great African master here are interesting. "For after the Bishop of Rome" [either Eleutherus or Victor] "had acknowledged the prophetic gifts of Montanus, Prisca, and Maximilla, and in consequence of the acknowledgment had bestowed his peace on the churches of Asia and Phrygia,

* The words of the Gallican confessors in their letter to Eleutherus were: "Montanus (and others) were esteemed by many for their gifts (as there were many other wonderful powers of divine grace yet exhibited even at this time in different churches); they created the belief with many that they also were endued with prophecy." For these "they negotiated, as it were, for the *peace of the Churches*" with Eleutherus, and also with the brethren in Asia and Phrygia.—Eusebius: *H. E.*, v. 3.

he (Praxeas), by importunately urging false accusations against the prophets themselves and their churches, and insisting on the authority of the bishop's predecessors in the see, compelled him to recall the pacific letter which he had issued." (Tertullian, *Adv. Praxean*, cap. I.)

There is no question but that Montanism was the most dangerous heresy as regards the peace of the Church which had arisen in the first century and a half of its existence. The various Gnostic heresies, it is true, were more far-reaching and probably affected greater numbers in the great centres of population. But the Gnostic heresies, as far as we are acquainted with them, were not Christian—were altogether outside the pale of the Catholic Church. Montanism, on the other hand, arose in the heart of Christian communities, and in its burning advocacy of the old strictness and austerity of primitive Christianity, awoke deep sympathy in the hearts of many of the most earnest followers of Jesus, in spite of its strange delusion respecting the message of the new prophecy.

With the exception of this grave delusion it does not appear that on great doctrinal questions there was any real difference between the Catholics and the Montanists, although Hippolytus ("Refutation," x. 22) charges them with holding Patripassian opinions. It would be difficult, however, with our present knowledge, to brand them on this account with holding any definite error, for the language at this period on the subject of the Trinity was often loose and unguarded.

But the views of Montanists on the new prophecy were amply sufficient to warrant the stern rejection which the sect met with at the hands of Catholic teachers. Montanism, after an existence of some fifty years, was gradually stamped out. It produced no more inspired prophets or prophetesses when Montanus, Prisca, and Maximilla had passed away; and after the first decades of the third century very little is heard of it. Only in Phrygia and its neighbourhood, the land of its nativity, did it hold its ground. In these districts Montanistic communities are heard of as late as the fourth century. With the exception of Tertullian no considerable writer or theologian

appears in its ranks, and the adhesion of Tertullian in his later life was gained no doubt largely owing to the uncompromising stand of the Montanistic teaching against the new and laxer policy of the Church.

SECTION III.—ALEXANDRIA: CLEMENT AND ORIGEN.

THERE were two great cities in the Roman Empire of the second and third centuries of the Christian era which, from their opulence, the number of their inhabitants and their general commercial importance, occupied a position only second to Rome itself. The one was Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, the other Carthage, the chief city of the wealthy and populous province of North Africa. There is no doubt that in the first days of Christianity the religion of Jesus penetrated into these great centres of population. But it is only in quite the latter years of the second century that their churches came to occupy a prominent position.

In both these cities at that period arose teachers who attained extraordinary prominence among all the leading communities of Christians.

Alexandria was the emporium through which the trade of Egypt, Arabia, and far-away India largely flowed on its way to the capital and the Western provinces of the Empire. In the days of the earlier Emperors it was said to contain as many as three hundred thousand free inhabitants and an equal number of slaves. Tradition ascribes to S. Mark the introduction of Christianity into the Egyptian capital, which subsequently became the cradle of Gnosticism, and the centre of its strange philosophical speculations.

There is, however, little to show that Christianity spread among the native Egyptians, in what would now be termed the "hinterland" of the great city, before the latter half of the third century; we have learned in late years much about the condition of Egypt under the Empire, but all that has come before us serves only to confirm the well-known picture of the historian of the *Decline and Fall.* "The progress of Christianity was for a long time confined within the limits of

a single city, and till the close of the second century the predecessors of Demetrius (Bishop of Alexandria, A.D. 189) were the only prelates of the Christian Church. . . . The body of the natives, a people distinguished by a sullen inflexibility of temper, entertained the new doctrine with coldness and reluctance, and even in the time of Origen it was rare to meet with an Egyptian who had surmounted his early prejudices in favour of the sacred animals of his country. As soon, indeed, as Christianity had mounted the throne, the zeal of those barbarians obeyed the prevailing impulsion; the cities of Egypt were filled with bishops, and the deserts of the Thebais swarmed with hermits." *

In the city of Alexandria existed a catechetical school, dating, some think, from the days of S. Mark. The school, after the middle of the second century, assumed a position of considerable importance as a seminary of Christian instruction, and its mastership was held by a succession of eminent men, who spread its fame into distant countries.

The first of these distinguished teachers was Pantænus, whose teaching work in Alexandria seems to have begun somewhat before A.D. 186. Of this Pantænus we know little beyond the high testimony paid him by his pupil and successor, Clement, who, after enumerating the great teachers at whose feet he had sat, refers to Pantænus in the following remarkable terms: "When I came upon the last (he was first in power), having tracked him out concealed in Egypt, I found rest. He, the true, the Sicilian bee, gathering the spoil of the flowers of the prophetic and apostolic meadow, engendered in the souls of his hearers a deathless element of knowledge. Well they" [the teachers whom Clement had listened to], "preserving the tradition of the blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy Apostles Peter, James, John and Paul, the son receiving it from the father (but few were like the fathers), came by God's will to us also to deposit those ancestral and apostolic seeds." †

* Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, xv.

† Clem. Alex. *Stromata*, Book I., Chap. I., and see too Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 11. Eusebius says that Pantænus was also expressly mentioned by name by Clement

The second of the great masters of the Alexandrian school was the famous Clement, whose words have just been quoted. Clement's life story, beyond the fact of his having followed his master, Pantænus, in the headship of the Alexandria school, is almost a blank, save for what we gather incidentally from his surviving writings. He tells us that he spent his earlier years in search of wisdom, that he was the pupil of various eminent teachers, but that it was in Pantænus' teaching that at last he found rest. He was driven from his work in the school at Alexandria by the persecution of Severus early in the second century, and tradition speaks of his dying about the year 220. But although the details of most of his life are unknown, he has left behind him many writings, very considerable portions of which we still possess. These works of his were widely read at the end of the second and through the third centuries, and they exercised a great, even a lasting, influence on the Catholic Church.

It was Clement who really introduced into Christian teaching the study of heathen philosophy. Justin Martyr, about a quarter of a century earlier, had in some measure anticipated him here in the view that a Christian training by no means excluded the study of the great masters of antiquity; but the reading of Justin was altogether on a much narrower scale than that of the great Alexandrian master. It may be generally assumed that, prior to Clement, Christian teachers viewed all the great philosophers with dislike, and looked on their writings as opposed to Christianity. Clement took a broader and truer view of the great Greek masters, and urged that in them might often be found glimpses of the truth; that, in fact, the noble Greek philosophy was the preparation of the Greeks for the full revelation of Christ. It may be said that Clement and his successor, and in some respects his disciple, the yet greater Origen, did for the schools

in the *Hypotyposes* (or "Institutions"). This work, however, is lost; but Eusebius especially refers to the above-quoted passage from the *Stromata*, which he believes refers to this Pantænus.

Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 10, also, but somewhat vaguely, speaks of Pantænus having undertaken a missionary journey to the nations of the East, travelling as far as the "Indies," and subsequently returning to Alexandria.

of Christianity what Zephyrinus and Callistus and their followers did for practical Christianity. The latter broadened immensely its sphere of action, the former did the same for its sphere of study, thus elevating Christianity from a position which there seemed some danger of its occupying, as the religion merely of a devoted but narrow and exclusive sect, and enabling it to become the religion of the world.

Clement has been well represented as seeking the truth from whatever quarter he could obtain it, believing that all that is good comes from God, wherever it be found. His orthodoxy in deep fundamental questions, as far as it went, has never been fairly impugned. He believed in a personal Son of God, who was the Reason and Wisdom of God, and distinctly taught that the Son of God became incarnate. This true scholar was a voluminous writer. His three great works—(1) "The Exhortation to the Heathen"; (2) "The Instructor or Pædagogus"; (3) "The Stromata or Miscellanies" (literally "The Tapestry")—we possess, complete or nearly complete. They form a series, and are the largest and perhaps the most valuable early Christian remains which have come down to us, dating, as they do, only a little more than a century after S. John's death. There is a long list of other treatises and works by Clement given us by Eusebius and Jerome, but with the exception of the treatise or more probably the sermon, "Who is the rich man that is saved?" and a few fragments, these are all lost. It is noteworthy that all the Books included in the Canon of the Old Testament, save Ruth and the Song of Solomon, are quoted as authoritative in his extant works. In the New Testament Canon he refers to and quotes from all the Books of the Canon, with the exception of Philemon, the second Epistle of S. Peter, and the Epistle of S. James.

The third of the famous teachers of the Alexandrian Catechetical school was, in all respects, a more distinguished theologian and thought leader than either of his eminent predecessors. Origen holds a unique place among the Christian teachers of the first three centuries. Unlike either Pantænus

or Clement, the story of his stormy and chequered career is fairly well known.

Born at Alexandria somewhere about A.D. 185, of Christian parents, at an early age he was placed under the tutelage of Pantænus or Clement. His father, Leonidas, suffered martyrdom early in the third century, and the young Origen, who had displayed extraordinary talents and powers of work, was soon placed by the Bishop of Alexandria Demetrius at the head of the catechetical school in his native city. But although thus early a prominent teacher, he remained still an indefatigable student, not only of Christian lore but of the principal Greek writers. He devoted himself besides with great ardour to Hebrew studies. An apparently true tradition speaks of his ascetic, devoted life. His fame as a teacher and a profound scholar soon spread far beyond Alexandria, which, however, remained the principal scene of his literary activities for some twenty-eight years, though he undertook many journeys to Rome, Syria, Arabia, Palestine. It was in this period of his career that he was summoned to visit Mamæa, the mother of Alexander Severus, who became subsequently Emperor, to instruct her in Christianity. He remained with this illustrious lady some time, "exhibiting," as Eusebius (*H. E.*, vi. 21) tells us, "innumerable illustrations of the glory of the Lord, and of the excellence of divine instruction."

It was about A.D. 228–30 that the real troubles of Origen's life commenced. A bitter feud sprang up between Bishop Demetrius and the world-renowned scholar. Many students of the period somewhat reluctantly see in the hostility of the bishop a restless jealousy of the brilliant writer and teacher; they are probably accurate in their conclusions, but at the same time Origen's apologists are compelled to recognise in him a want of subordination, and at times even an ill-balanced zeal; nor can his warmest admirers always defend his theological opinions, which not infrequently took the form of wild and somewhat baseless speculations. The powerful bishop procured his banishment from Alexandria, so long his home, and even his deposition from the status

of a presbyter, to which office he had been ordained by the Bishops of Palestine. Henceforward we find Origen living under the ban of the Alexandrian Church, and indeed of many other important communities influenced by Alexandria. He now took up his abode at Cæsarea, where he organised a school of divinity, the reputation of which, under his matchless teaching, was said to rival that of Alexandria. In his later years we hear of him in correspondence with the so-called Christian Emperor Philip, and his Empress. But it was a mournful evening to the life of the great and famous scholar, and a poor guerdon after all to live on thus condemned, and viewed with suspicion, if not with positive dislike, by a very considerable portion of the Catholic Church, for which he had laboured for so many long years with such tireless devotion and conspicuous success. He was subsequently arrested and maltreated by the Pagan authorities in the Decian persecution; dying not long after the persecution had ceased, about the year 254, at Tyre, where his grave was still pointed out in the Middle Ages.

In some respects Origen was a follower of Clement, his teacher and predecessor in the headship of the catechetical school, inasmuch as he was a profound student of the great Greek philosophers. He even composed an important work in ten books, of which only fragments remain, in imitation of, and bearing the same name as, the famous *Stromata* of Clement. During a long life of ceaseless work Origen put out, so Epiphanius tells us, as many as 6,000 volumes, but to reach anything like this amazing number (which is probably greatly exaggerated) every treatise, large and small, every homily must have been reckoned as a separate volume. Jerome, too, who at one time was a strong admirer of Origen, says, "He wrote more than any individual could read."

Perhaps the greatest of his literary achievements, and one to which the friends and foes of the great Alexandrian must unite in awarding unstinting praise, was his noble work in criticism. He spent large portions of more than twenty years in attempting to provide a complete revision of the text of the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament

Scriptures. It is said that his studies in Hebrew were undertaken to qualify himself for this task. Large sections of this work have been preserved, but the bulk of his notes and texts, contained, it is said, in forty or fifty volumes, has perished. It is supposed to have been burnt in the library of Cæsarea when that city was taken by the Arabs in A.D. 653. This scholarly and careful effort in Textual Criticism was far in advance of anything undertaken in the Christian Church for centuries after Origen's death.

Although the extant works of this most eminent teacher are numerous, they bear no comparison to the number of his lost writings. The enormous mass of his compositions may be roughly divided as follows:

(1) His Textual studies, perhaps the most important of all, of which we have already spoken.

(2) His Apologetics. Origen's principal work in this department of theology, with which we are acquainted, is his book "Against Celsus," written at Cæsarea far on in his life, when Philip, the so-called Christian, was reigning. This important composition we possess in its entirety. The writing in question is considered, by many scholars, as the great apologetic work of Christian antiquity. It bears the mark of Origen's profound studies in ancient philosophies which clearly coloured much of his more speculative theology. It has been well said that his argument is most effective "when he appeals to the spirit and power of Christianity as an evidence of its truth."

(3) His exegetical labours. These extend over the whole of the Old and the New Testaments, and consist of Scholia, short notes largely grammatical; of Homilies, or Expositions; and of more or less elaborate Commentaries. Very few of all these have been preserved in the Greek originals, but we possess many Latin translations of portions of them.

It is in this department of his vast work that this true-hearted toiler for God excited much of the animosity which has in all ages pursued him. It was no doubt a dangerous principle, and one that admitted of much perilous exaggeration to affirm, that things written in Holy Scripture which offended his exegetical sense, might be fairly looked upon as

allegories. Of this danger, however, he evidently was sensible when (*De Principiis*, iv., i. 19) he wrote the following words: "Let no one suspect that we do not believe any history in Scripture to be real, because we suspect certain events related in it not to have taken place . . . we are manifestly of opinion that the truth of the history may and ought to be maintained in *the majority of instances*." This whole section of the *De Principiis* deserves careful study by both the friends and foes of the famous Alexandrian master.

(4) Of his dogmatical writings only one important work has come down to us, the *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, or "Fundamental Doctrines," and that in the Latin translation of Rufinus, the translator of which has in many passages taken upon himself, as we know, to alter and "improve" upon the original. The Greek version which Origen really wrote has perished; only a few fragments have been preserved. It is from these mainly that it has been ascertained that Rufinus has in various places altered the original. The *Stromata*, above referred to, has perished, save for a few fragments.

In great essentials Origen was generally a Catholic teacher; he held that Christianity was a practical and religious saving principle, and he pressed home to the hearts and heads of men that simple faith was sufficient for the renewal and salvation of man. Later, in times of bitter controversy, both the Catholics and the Arians appealed to his teaching; but the inferences of Arius in respect to his Christology were distinctly unfair. It has been well said that "a mind so speculative as that of Origen, and so engrossed with the deepest and most difficult problems of human thought, must sometimes have expressed itself in a way liable to be misunderstood." It must, too, in forming any judgment on Origen's statements, be ever borne in mind that "when he lived and taught, no General Council had yet been held, to formulate in clear-cut language the teaching of the Catholic Church upon any of those great questions of theology which convulsed the Christian world during the two centuries, the fourth and fifth, which followed the century in which the Alexandrian master thought and wrote."

There is no doubt that Origen gave grave offence to serious theologians in his own day and in subsequent times, rather by his *isolated* propositions than by his statements regarding great Catholic doctrines. Some of these isolated propositions from their very strangeness and novelty acquired a wide notoriety, and, unfortunately, it is by these often somewhat wild speculations that Origen is best known. Those who, not unrighteously, condemn these as purely speculative, as outside if not contrary to Scripture, forget the real and massive work of the great master's life, a work simply unique in the story of Christendom. Textual critic, grammarian, exegete, homilist, Christian apologist, teacher of the highest theology, Origen was all these. From the days of the divinely taught Apostles of the Lord no Christian scholar had arisen comparable to him. In the long ages which have elapsed since "the passing" of the Great Teacher, it would be hard to find his peer.

Among the most noted of the speculative propositions— unheard of in those Holy Scriptures which Origen loved so well — which have been condemned by Catholic Christianity, and are esteemed by many as blots upon the white record of his blameless scholar life, are his curious doctrines respecting the pre-existence of souls, and his teaching respecting punishments, which he held to be merely corrective, being ordained in order that all creatures may be eventually restored to their original perfection. No condemned soul, according to Origen, was without hope, although thousands of years of torment might elapse before the suffering to which the soul was condemned had wrought its cleansing effect.

There is no doubt, however, that the unmerited persecution he underwent during the later years of his life, which separated him from the communion of his own Church of Alexandria and of other influential churches, placed him in a false position, and opened the door to much of the subsequent onslaught on his reputation. During the latter years of his life Origen was clearly under the ban of the larger portion of the Catholic Church — unfairly it seems, but the fact still remains.

After his death his orthodoxy, rightly or wrongly, was very soon widely impugned; but as early as the fourth century his memory found many able and zealous defenders, amongst them the famous historian Eusebius, and even the great Athanasius. Nor were these true scholars and divines by any means alone in their generous advocacy of Origen's claim to Catholic reverence.

But after all they were in the minority. In the West the famous and widely-read Vincent of Lerins, in the first half of the fifth century, spoke of Origen as a warning and example, in his well-known *Commonitorium*, pointing out how even the most learned of Church teachers might become a misleading light. Even the school of Alexandria, although, perhaps unconsciously, profoundly influenced by his writings, repudiated the greatest of her sons, and the Church of Antioch followed suit. In the year 553 Justinian and the fifth Œcumenical Council of Constantinople anathematised the teaching of Origen.

In modern times, far removed from an age when jealousies and prejudices unfavourably affected the Church's estimate of his powers, both Romanists and Anglicans have come to entertain a broader and nobler conception of the greatest of the Church's scholar-writers of the first three centuries. They do not attempt to condone his errors, but they unite in acknowledging the mighty debt which the Catholic Church of all ages owes to the great Alexandrian. For instance, Bishop Bull, who will ever hold a high place, perhaps the highest, among our Anglican divines, defends his general orthodoxy; while Tillemont, "the sure-footed" historian of Port Royal, whose matchless erudition is one of the household words of all fair-minded Catholics, Roman and Anglican alike, whose praise is justly in all the Churches, dares to say in the face of ancient condemnation and jealous misrepresentation, "that although such a man might hold heretical opinions, he could not be a heretic, since he was utterly free from the spirit which constitutes the guilt of heresy."

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM DECIUS TO DIOCLETIAN.

SECTION I.—CARTHAGE: CYPRIAN.

CARTHAGE in the first half of the third century of the Christian era, Herodian tells us, was in population and wealth the equal of Alexandria and second only to Rome. The great city had a wonderful history; it had long disputed the sovereignty of the Mediterranean seaboard with Rome, and after a contest, which more or less went on for a century, was completely defeated, and in the year 146 B.C. was burned and utterly desolated. It was said that in the hour of its ruin it contained 700,000 inhabitants. Under Julius Cæsar and Augustus it became once more an important and flourishing city and a mighty emporium of commerce. Its rare beauty gave it an especial distinction among the great homes of wealth and industry of the old world. "Faintly we may picture to ourselves a material something not wholly unlike what Carthage was. Scarcely any city yields so many scenes. The streets gathering themselves in unique symmetry to the feet of sudden steeps and many tinted marble heights, or opening full on the glistening quays and the breathless harbours, graceful hills about it crowned with shrines and villas . . . the vast lake where navies of commerce and of pleasure rode close to the streets, severed by a thread from the open sea, mountain crests in snow watching from the distance, through all and over all that keen light and intense blue of Africa."* But the city, literally matchless for beauty

* Archbishop Benson: *Cyprian*—Introduction. "The beautiful gardens and shady, woody pleasaunces of the wealthy nobles and merchants of Carthage stretched for miles outside the city, unmatched even at Rome."

and wealth, has experienced the strangest vicissitudes. It arose, perhaps, grander than ever during the Empire after its utter destruction in the Punic Wars. It was wrecked and desolated again by the Vandals under Genseric in the year 439; and in the last years of the seventh century "whatever yet remained of Carthage was delivered to the flames by the conquering Mohammedan Arabs . . . The very ruins of Carthage have perished, and the place might be unknown if some broken arches of an aqueduct did not guide the footsteps of the inquisitive traveller."* Of *material* Carthage, writes the last scholarly biographer of S. Cyprian, we have less knowledge than of any great city. "Carthage has been learnedly rebuilt in the air, its temples and streets mapped and raised, but all are as visionary as a mirage."

In this magnificent city, and in the province of which it was the centre, before the middle of the third century a flourishing branch of the Christian Church existed, consisting of many communities, and evidently elaborately organised. Sixty-six bishops met Cyprian, the Metropolitan, at the Council held in Carthage in A.D. 253. In the Cyprianic papers it is said that the names of as many as a hundred and fifty African bishops occur.†

A striking fact is noticeable in connection with this North African Church. It was here, not in Rome and Italy, that *Latin* Christianity and literature first arose, here that the earliest of the Latin versions of the New Testament Scriptures was made. While the Christian Church at Rome was still Greek, a Church largely made up of foreigners resident in the great capital, in Carthage the Roman and Latin speaking population was in great measure Christian. No tradition has reached us of the date when the religion of Jesus was first introduced into this important province of the Empire. Augustine suggests, when speaking of the names by which the two Sacraments were known in Africa, "Salus" and "Vita,"

* Gibbon: *Decline and Fall*, chap. li. For a glowing picture of ancient Carthage compare *Salambo*, by Gustave Flaubert.

† Archbishop Benson: *Cyprian*, Introduction. And of all these bishops not more than one appears to possess a Punic name, the vast majority are Latin names.

that the names in question must have come through some Apostolic source. Among the listeners to Peter's famous Pentecostal sermon were, we read (Acts ii. 10), "dwellers in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene." The story of Jesus might well have been spread along the African coast by these Jews of Cyrene, who had listened to S. Peter.

But we have selected Carthage and Alexandria for our especial study because, in the churches of these famous Imperial centres, at the most critical moment in the early story of Christianity, when the religion of Jesus was first brought *publicly* face to face with Paganism, arose the four greatest earthly makers of Christianity, who appeared in the first two hundred and eighty years of stress and storm. We have dwelt on the Alexandrian masters, Clement and Origen; we have spoken, too, already, of the Carthaginian master, Tertullian,* who taught and wrote in the first quarter of the third century. The last in order of time of these four great ones, Cyprian of Carthage, who suffered martyrdom for the Faith in the year 258, was in some respects the most eminent of them all. As a writer, indeed, although his literary works are deservedly famous, and were far-reaching in their influence, he was inferior to the first three, Clement, Origen, and Tertullian; but he represents a type of man somewhat different from any that had as yet appeared among the ranks of the Christian communities.

He was, it is true, a great scholar and thinker, but at the same time he was, what such men usually are not, a born leader, of a wondrously winning personality which aroused the warmest and most affectionate devotion among his contemporaries; a devotion which survived him, as we see in the references to him and his work again and again, in the writings of Augustine in the West, and of Gregory Nazianzen in the East. To this was added the halo of a white, pure life; men in different lands and of different race believed in his unswerving integrity of purpose, even when they differed from his views.

* Tertullian and his life-work were especially dwelt upon in Chapter XII., because his influence and teaching were inseparably bound up with the important school of thought which grew up at Rome under Hippolytus in the Pontificates of Zephyrinus and Callistus.

In some respects he is justly considered as the founder of Latin Christianity. Deeply impressed by his training and earlier associations with the majesty of the Roman strength and Roman respect of law, he believed that the strength of the Church was based upon its unity, and that this unity depended upon its acknowledgment of the absolute supremacy of the bishop—who alone could enforce discipline and order, in matters of doctrine as well as in life.

Until the time of Cyprian, "the absolute supremacy of the bishop had been little more than a lofty title, or, at least, a vague, ill-defined assumption." Through his teaching and vast influence it became "a substantial and world-wide fact." He added little or nothing to the claims of the Episcopate put forward by men like Ignatius or Irenæus—for with Ignatius at the beginning of the second century the bishop was "the centre of Christian unity"; with Irenæus, far on in the same century, he was "the depository of Apostolic tradition." Cyprian, in his teaching, closely followed these great masters; but he raised the Episcopate to a higher level, and put new force into old titles of respect. With Cyprian, the bishop was "the absolute Vice-gerent of Christ in things spiritual." He was popularly elected, it is true, by the commons of Christ's Church, but was no bishop until he had received consecration through bishops by transmission from times when the guidance of the Apostles was present in the Church.*

From the position of lofty independence to which Cyprian raised the Episcopate it has never since been deposed. His theory underlies Catholic Christendom to-day. Wherever it has been departed from, Church order has gravely suffered. Rome, resting largely upon traditional statements of Cyprian, which the great theologian never really advanced, has subsequently overridden the freedom of the Episcopate by a usurpation unquestioned in a large portion of Western Christendom, while a reaction against Rome in some of the countries of North-Western Europe has deliberately set aside bishops altogether and the episcopal theory of Church govern-

* *Cf.* Bishop Lightfoot, Dissertation on the Christian Ministry in *Ep. to Philippians*. Archbishop Benson, *Cyprian*, chap. xii.

ment. From this fatal error has sprung much of the disorder in doctrines, teaching, and ecclesiastical organisation which so many serious members of the non-episcopal communities honestly deplore.*

We shall dwell with some detail upon the Church of Carthage and upon its great chief, for much light will be thrown thereby upon the inner life of the Church in his day. Some serious, special difficulties presented themselves in the heart of the charmed circle of the Christian communities. These had to be grappled with, and without delay, for they threatened to disturb the Church's government and gravely to interfere with its discipline and order.

Nothing is known of Cyprian's early life. A native most probably of Carthage, we first hear of him about the year 246, in the reign of the Emperor Philip, at which date he was the foremost advocate in the law courts of Carthage, and had just joined the Christian community. He was possessed of great wealth. His villa was magnificent, and his gardens famed for their beauty. In the Christian Church he became a deacon, then a presbyter, and with strange rapidity we find him, on the death of the Bishop of Carthage, Donatus, called by the unanimous voice of the community of believers to the vacant chief post in the Church. Only five presbyters are related to have been opposed to the popular election, and these five for a long period remained in bitter antagonism. Cyprian at first declined the high office thus thrust upon him, but the mass of the Christian population of the great city, no inconsiderable portion of the citizens, would hear of no refusal. Cyprian then consented to accept the important and arduous office. This was in the year 248. His great reputation, his wide scholarship, his known eloquence and high character, all designated the new convert as the most fitting successor to Donatus.

When Cyprian became chief of the Christian society of

* The great and far-reaching Anglo-Catholic Communion, which numbers in its Episcopate bishops of sees situate in Great Britain, and in the yet greater Britain beyond the oceans, has followed a *via media* between these two extremes. The theory of Anglican episcopal government is largely that of Cyprian.

the third city of the Roman Empire, only a few months remained to the communities of the long period of stillness, of immunity from all persecution, which, with only a brief interruption, had lasted some thirty-eight years.

The unlooked-for death of the Emperor Philip in a military revolt removed from the scene one who, if not a Christian, was certainly the friend of the Christians. A very different spirit was at once shown by his successor, the choice of the powerful army of Mœsia, which had revolted against Philip. The new Emperor Decius was no ordinary man. In the "Augustan History" he occupies a very honourable place among the small number of "good Emperors" who reigned between Augustus and Diocletian; and in later times is the subject of a special panegyric in the brilliant pages of the historian of the *Decline and Fall.* To Decius the presence of the Christians in Rome and in all the provinces, their numbers and increasing influence, seemed one of the principal causes of the deterioration of the Empire; and early in his reign he promulgated a persecuting edict, the severest that had yet been issued by the Roman Government. The text of the edict has not been preserved, but its purport is well known. Its intention was evidently their extermination throughout the Empire. To slay them was of course, considering their vast numbers, not practicable: but every possible means was to be adopted to induce the Christians to return to the Official Religion of the Empire. Gentle means of persuasion were to be used at first, then severe measures were to be resorted to. The profession of the hated religion was to be rendered impossible. The edict was far-reaching; its provision affected all ranks—all ages. It was to run in Rome and the provinces alike.

There was no delay in putting the stern decree into execution. Early in the year 250 the Christian communities were startled at the news of the martyrdom of Fabian, Bishop of Rome. Of the other chiefs of the proscribed sect, the Bishops of Antioch and Jerusalem died soon in prison, Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, was only saved by flight, Origen, the greatest living Christian teacher, was subjected to cruel torture.

We have chosen to speak more particularly of Carthage, where Cyprian had just been elected bishop, as the representative city at this juncture. When the order for persecution arrived in the great North African capital the terror was widespread. It affected all classes in the Christian population. Anyone might be summoned and required at once to sacrifice, and apparently many were brought to submission.

It is not improbable, considering the numbers who were called upon in Carthage to declare "for Paganism," that a general solemn "supplicatio" was arranged, to which all citizens were summoned, and that thus it would be seen at once who would submit and who would resist. At all events the immediate result was the imprisonment of a considerable number of Christians, who were cruelly dealt with—confiscation of their property, rigorous imprisonment and torture, and in some cases even death, quickly following upon the arrest.

Those who were steadfast, who endured any loss or suffering sooner than apostatise, require no special mention; they only followed in the steps of the brave confessors who in the successive persecutions for the past 186 years had, by their steadfast endurance, been at once the strength and the glory of Christianity. But in this Decian persecution in the sad year 250 there were a great number of Christians whose courage failed them, and who, to escape the loss of their goods, to free themselves from the penalties attached to the profession of their faith, consented to sacrifice, to burn incense, or, strange to say, to purchase certificates (*libelli*) which officially declared that they *had* sacrificed or burnt incense before the altar of the "Divine Emperor" or some other deity of Rome.

It was a novel experience in the story of the Church, this quick surrender on the part of Christians, this ready denial of their faith, this strange submission to the gods of Rome; an experience as sad and grievous as it was unique.

We have not to search long before we find the causes of this falling away of so many in the first hour of stern trial. For some thirty-eight years, save for the brief interlude of

fitful persecution in the reign of Maximinus, all persecution for the Name's sake had been unknown. For the first time since the dread hour when the officers of Nero laid violent hands on the Christians of Rome, the followers of Jesus had for a lengthened period enjoyed quiet and stillness, had been allowed to worship as they chose, had been permitted openly to call themselves by the name of Him they loved. When the Decian storm broke over them only very old men could remember the days of severe trial in the early years of the century; indeed, to the contemporaries of Cyprian persecution was rather a tradition than an experience. During the long stillness in many quarters laxity of living had replaced the old gravity and austerity of the Christian life lived so long amid the stress and storm of daily peril and awful risk. Church discipline had become in many centres sadly relaxed.

The bishops in many instances, while enjoying the privileges of their rank in the community, had become engrossed in the pleasures and business of the life in the midst of which they lived. Some had devoted themselves to agriculture, some to commerce, some to banking and even to usury. Not unknown in the Church circles of the middle of the third century were even immoral chief pastors. Some of the North African bishops were positively notorious for their share in the slave trade of the Sahara! Ignorance, too, of the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith was not unknown among the Church leaders. "Cold and dark are the shades which are flung athwart the bright tracts and around the glowing lights of the scenes of this early Church life. If it were possible for such men to be bishops we can understand how among their proselytes they tolerated the makers of idols and the compounders of incense, or among their laity astrologers and theatrical trainers."*

These gloomy pictures of the Church of this period are drawn mainly from the epistles of Cyprian and the treatises of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, who wrote about a century and a half later.

* Archbishop Benson: *Cyprian*, i. 10.

It is easy to understand how, in a Church which contained such unworthy members, some of them, even bearers of high office in the congregation, would, at the first blast of a vigorous persecution, fall away, and for the sake of preserving life and all that made life pleasant, would deny the Name for which their fathers had so gladly died.

Cyprian, we read, was appalled at the first rush of faithless members of his flock to the Forum of Carthage or the temples of the gods to sacrifice and to burn incense at the heathen altars, and so, at what seemed an easy concession, purchase safety and immunity. What happened at Carthage was repeated at Rome and Alexandria, and in other great centres of the Empire. It was even asserted, though no doubt with exaggeration, that the majority of the Christians fell away at this awful moment of trial.

The deserters from the cause were divided into two classes. Those who sacrificed and burnt incense at the altars of the gods "Sacrificati" and "Thurificati," and those who, for a sum of money, large or small, purchased from the Imperial magistrates certificates (*libelli*), that they had satisfied the officials of the State of their "orthodox State Paganism." These last were generally known as Libellatics, *Libellatici*. From the accounts we possess of the subsequent trouble in the Christian Church in dealing with these "lapsed Christians" who wished to be received again into communion with the Church, a great number of these *libelli*,* or certificates of Paganism, must have been issued.

The reaction, however, soon came, and was remarkable. Numbers of those who in the first moment of the terror had fallen away and had consented to sacrifice, or to purchase safety by means of a *libellus* from the State authorities, begged to be admitted once more to communion with the Church they had for a moment denied. It was a grave

* From the passages referring to the "Lapsi" in the writings of Cyprian and Augustine there appear to have been two forms of these *libelli*: the more usual being a certificate issued by the Roman magistrate to the Christian, stating that the recipient was a Pagan in the State sense, and the second form being a document given by the Christian himself, stating that he had formally denied Christ, and had adopted the Pagan *cultus*.

difficulty how these repentant ones were to be treated. Some of them voluntarily reappeared before the Imperial tribunal, defied the edict, and gladly received the punishment of confiscation, exile, or even death; others in silence and in secret renounced their weakness, and tried by a life of penitence to atone for their sin. Many of these availed themselves of a strange privilege, claimed by those who had played a braver part in the persecution, who for the Name's sake had suffered the spoiling of their goods, had endured imprisonment and torture, and now lay in prison waiting for death. This was the right of at once restoring "lapsed" persons to all the privileges of Church communion. It is not known how long this claim to a singular power or privilege had existed; probably it dated far back, and had its origin in the extraordinary honour ever paid to confessors of the Faith. Any request made by such brave and constant ones would no doubt always be reverently listened to. But in the Decian persecution, when so many fell away, the claim was obviously liable to gross abuse.

This usage prevailed in other centres in Egypt and in Asia, and, to a certain extent, in Rome; but it was in Carthage that it was most apparent.* There the confessors in prison were literally besieged by crowds of the "Lapsi" begging for "Letters of Peace" and reconciliation. There was only one in that harassed and half-ruined community of Carthage whose voice would be listened to in this hour of confusion and dismay, and he was in exile. The thoughts of all serious, anxious Christians in the North African province turned to Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, who, when the edict of

* A very strong and remarkable passage on this claim of confessors to be able to forgive grave sin occurs in Tertullian's treatise, *De Pudicitia*, C. 22, written a good many years before the Decian persecution. "Suppose now your martyr beneath the sword, with head already poised for the blow; suppose him on the cross, with body already outstretched; suppose him at the stake with the lion already let loose; on the axle-tree with the fire already heaped, in the very certainty, I say, and possession of martyrdom, who permits (the Church) to condone offences which are reserved for God, offences which not even Apostles have judged condonable? . . . Let it suffice the martyr to purge his own sins."

Decius was put out, had withdrawn himself* for a season from the city, and from a temporary retirement watched the storm, and helped to guide his harassed Church in its moment of extreme difficulty and danger.

The great bishop from his retirement was dismayed at this claim on the part of the imprisoned confessors—he viewed it as calculated to destroy all discipline in the Church and as capable of being used most mischievously, and he wrote that as soon as possible a Council of Bishops should be assembled at Carthage and at Rome, who would examine the whole question of the unhappy "Lapsi," and devise a wise and gracious method by which those who earnestly desired it might be restored to communion.

The opportunity soon came. The life and reign of Decius came to an end in a battle during the campaign which the Emperor had undertaken against the Goths, who were sorely pressing the Empire on its eastern frontier, and for some months confusion prevailed at Rome.

During the months of confusion which followed the death of Decius on the field of battle the persecuting edict of that Emperor, although not cancelled, was no longer pressed; and gradually once again a partial "stillness" was enjoyed by the harassed Church. Cyprian returned to Carthage, and without delay summoned the bishops of his important province to what is known as Cyprian's First Council of Carthage. The date was A.D. 251.

The question of the treatment of the "Lapsed" was carefully

* Cyprian's retirement in this fiery persecution of Decius has been variously commented upon. He was proscribed by name, and his death would have deprived the Christians of North Africa of the one leader they possessed, on whose commanding genius they relied for advice and guidance. Cyprian was well aware of this, and for the Church's sake withdrew from the scene of action, conscious that his life, not his death, would be of most service in "the terror." His absolute fearlessness of death, however, was shown some six years later, when he felt that things were more settled and in better order, and that the great example of the Bishop of Carthage dying for the Name would be the best thing for the Church. So in A.D. 257-8, about six years after the events of which we are now speaking, when the persecution of the Emperor Valerian lay heavy on Carthage, resisting all entreaties to fly, Cyprian quietly remained to die. His martyrdom will be presently related.

gone into. The bishops and presbyters who had sacrificed, or who had procured certificates (*libelli*) of compliance with the State commands as expressed in the Imperial edict, were deposed at once from their functions.

The laity who had obtained certificates, the class of *Libellatici* generally, were treated with much consideration, and were generally allowed to return to communion after a period of penance. An inquiry into each case of apostasy was, however, directed, which determined the period of penance. Those who had actually sacrificed were not to be received until the hour of death, and then only if they had continued penitent. It seems, though this is not quite clear, that in many cases this last severity was subsequently mitigated or set aside, and none were eventually excluded from returning to communion with the Church. The Roman Church* accepted the wise, and on the whole merciful ruling of Cyprian and his Council, which indeed was generally followed in all the other great Churches.

This Council of Carthage, under the influence of Cyprian, ignored the interference of the confessors in the matter of the reconciliation of the "Lapsi." Such an irregular interference was considered, and rightly, a serious danger to any well-ordered system of organisation. (The principle of "merits" of certain saintly persons *supplementing* the insufficiency of others, curiously reappears, in another form, in the later history of the Church in the mediæval doctrine of "indulgences.")

No grateful praise is out of place for Cyprian's merciful work in this difficult question of the restoration of the erring. It passed into the code which has since regulated the dealings of the Catholic Church with sinners. No sin, however great, is beyond the hope of pardon.

The great Bishop of Carthage at this time put out several

* There was a party in Rome which persistently took a far severer view of the "Lapsi," and refused to receive again into communion any of the apostates. The head of this party was one Novatian, who became a schismatical Bishop of Rome. This grave schism, its widespread influence, and its long continuance, will be noticed further on when the story of the Church at Rome is related in detail.

important treatises on the subject. Some of his wise and generous conclusions were several times repeated or quoted by Augustine, writing some century and a half later. With Cyprian it was clear that "no human right exists to eradicate tares, or to break the poorest earthen vessels in pieces. Perfect freedom to become good corn, or (using another image) for the earthen vessel to make a golden urn of itself, belongs to every soul." It was a gracious and authoritative exposition of the Lord's parable of the tares,* and one which the Catholic Church has written for ever in its Rule of Life. The hope of restoration and reconciliation through the Lamb's precious blood is the priceless inheritance of every penitent sinner.

In a passage of the treatise *De Lapsis*, c. 16, beautiful as it is true, Cyprian thus inveighs against those stern puritans who would shut to sinners the blessed door of hope. "The solace of everlasting life they steal away, uproot the tree . . . wreck the ship ere it enter the haven . . . they then assail anew the fallen, silencing their sorrows, hushing the sobbing heart, disregarding the weeping eyes, drowning the entreaties of long and intense repentance toward a deeply offended Lord—and all the while it stands written, 'Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent.'"

The lull in the persecution which followed the death of the Emperor Decius was but of short duration. The circumstances under which it recommenced under his successor, the Emperor Gallus, were singular.

The plague was no unknown scourge in the early centuries of the Christian era. In the years 66, 67, 80, this fearful malady had appeared and re-appeared in the Empire. From the end of the second century it was ever present in one or other of the provinces. In the middle of the third century the pest had attained vast proportions, and for some twenty years we hear of its ravages in all parts of the Empire. It

* S. Jerome well writes: "Monemur, ne cito amputemus fratrem, quia fieri potest, ut ille, qui hodie noxio depravatus est dogmate, cras resipiscat, et defendere incipiat veritatem"; and compare Archbishop Benson, *S. Cyprian*, chap. iii.

seems to have been a malignant class of typhoid fever, accompanied by many distressing and dangerous complications, very infectious and often terribly fatal to its countless victims, and tending to return more than once to centres which it had already desolated. In A.D. 261, for instance, it made its appearance for the second time in Alexandria, and in four years, we read, it had reduced the population of that great city by about one-half. In A.D. 262 it is computed that while it was at its worst in Rome about 5,000 persons died daily in the capital city. In the year 252 it made its appearance at Carthage, where its ravages were terrible. The effect of this frightful scourge upon the Pagan citizens of the Empire seems to have been grievous. The worst passions of men were stirred up. The sick were uncared for; selfish greed, unbridled lust and disorder, reigned unchecked; physical terror became the dominant feeling in life. A city when attacked by the fearful malady became a vast charnel house; everywhere men only seemed to care for their own safety, while crime and all manner of wrong-doing increased with incredible rapidity. The ordinary government was paralysed in the presence of the universal terror.

In striking contrast to the selfishness and shameful excesses of the Pagan population was the behaviour of the Christian communities in these dread seasons. A wonderful picture, for instance, is preserved to us of the courage and devotion of the believers of Alexandria when the plague visited the great Egyptian centre some nine years later than the visitation of Carthage. There, under the influence and example of the bishop, the celebrated Dionysius, the Christians showed a noble pattern of self-sacrifice. In their tender care for their stricken brother or sister they disregarded all heed of self by even recklessly, as it seems, exposing themselves in their loving ministration to the deadly infection. The words of the great Bishop Dionysius, quoted by Eusebius (*H. E.*, vii. 22), are of singular interest: "Indeed, the most of our brethren by their exceeding great love and brotherly affection, not sparing themselves, and adhering to one another, were constantly watching the sick, ministering to their wants without fear

and without cessation, and healing them in Christ, have departed most sweetly with them." And further on he adds: "The best of our brethren indeed have departed life in this way, some indeed presbyters, some deacons, and of the people those that were exceedingly commended. So that this very form of death, with the piety and ardent faith which accompanied it, appeared to be but little inferior to martyrdom itself. They took up the bodies of the saints with their hands, and on their bosoms cleaned their eyes and closed their mouths, carried them on their shoulders and composed their limbs, embraced them, clung to them, and prepared them carefully (for the grave) with washing and garments, and ere long they themselves shared in receiving the same offices, those that survived always following those before them."

But self-sacrificing and devoted as were the ministrations of the members of the Christian communities of Alexandria and other great plague-stricken centres of population to their brethren in the Faith, the teaching and example of Cyprian when the terrible pestilence was raging at Carthage struck a new note of pity. Pontius, his deacon and biographer, tells us how Cyprian urged upon his flock that to help their own people was, after all, but an act of slender merit; the perfect Christian must pray for all alike, must minister to all alike in their great need. There must be no distinction of person, no inquiry as to creed; the Pagan and the persecutor must be succoured as well as the fellow-Christian. The believer must live up* to his name and his glorious ancestry, he must remember that God's sun shines for all, and His rain falls on the fields of the just and the unjust alike. The servant of God, then, must surely follow his Lord's example.

Such teaching had never been heard since the living voice of Jesus had ceased to speak to men. And the words of Cyprian of Carthage have never been forgotten. His teaching here, Christlike as it was generous, has been followed by every Christian nation on the earth, and the countless hospitals of

* The striking words of Pontius are worth quoting here: "Respondere nos decet natalibus nostris" (Pontius, *Vita Cyp.*, 9).

the world, mainly the outcome of the devotion and love of the followers of Christ, minister to all sufferers, simply regardless of race or creed.

Yet for their devotion and self-sacrifice the Christians of Carthage received but a sorry guerdon. The Emperor Gallus, dismayed at the progress of the plague, thought to avert the evident anger of the gods of Rome by means of solemn public sacrifices throughout the Empire. The non-attendance of Christians at these Pagan celebrations excited the anger of the multitude, who once more fancied that the wrath of the immortals was evoked by the teaching and practices of the mighty sect growing up in their midst who taught men to shun their altars. Thus it came to pass that the general persecution, which had died away when Decius perished, flamed up anew, and the Decian edict, which had never been revoked, was again set in force; while in Carthage, where a singularly famous Christian teacher swayed a great community by the magic of his words and the splendid devotion of his acts, the menacing cry was heard, "To the lions with Cyprian!"

The persecution of Gallus, though sharp and general, was but of short duration; for once more a military revolt put an end to the Emperor's reign and life. And the legions, who made and unmade at their fickle pleasure the lords of the Roman world, saluted as Emperor Valerian the Censor, who had first come into public notice in the reign of Decius. The new Sovereign was at first kindly disposed to his Christian subjects. It is noteworthy that, in distinction from the Decian persecution, no "Lapsi" seemed to have dishonoured the Name and to have degraded the profession of Christians in the stormy period which closed the reign of Gallus. The historian of this anxious period in the Church's early history would be unjust if he did not ascribe to the great Bishop of Carthage a large share in the re-awakening of the Church to its imperative duty of bravely and patiently submitting to any suffering rather than deny the Name.

A considerable period of quiet was enjoyed by the believers in Jesus after the accession of the Censor Valerian to the throne, A.D. 253. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria (quoted

by Eusebius, *H. E.*, vii. 10), writes thus strongly of the favourable disposition of this Emperor towards Christianity in the earlier years of his reign: "Kind and friendly he was towards the pious (Christians). For there was never any of the Emperors before him so favourably and benevolently disposed towards them; not even those who were openly said to be Christians received them with such extreme courtesy and friendship as did he at the commencement of his reign. All his house was filled with pious persons; it was indeed a congregation (ἐκκλησία) of the Lord. But the Master and Chief Ruler of the Egyptian Magi, Macrianus (who became Valerian's chief adviser), persuaded him to abandon this course, exhorting him to persecute and to slay these pure and holy men."

Before the change in Valerian's policy some two or three years of quietness remained for Cyprian to impress upon the men of his time his theory of Christian unity, his grand conception of the work and office of the Catholic Church. About a century and a quarter after the martyrdom of Cyprian, one of the greatest orators and theologians of the Catholic Church, Gregory of Nazianzen, somewhile bishop of the Metropolitan See of Constantinople, in one of his famous orations, delivered in the capital of the Eastern Empire, in glowing words thus describes the commanding influence which Cyprian had acquired in the Church at large, the mighty love and devotion he had gained over men's hearts far and near: "Not over the Church of Carthage alone does he preside, nor yet over the Church of Africa, famous until now from him and through him, but over all the Western Church, nay and almost the Eastern Church itself, and over the bounds of South and North. . . . Thus Cyprian becomes our own. . . . The very remembrance of the man is a sanctification." This was the estimate of one of the chiefest of Eastern theologians; while, in the West, only a very few years later, the great Augustine, one of his passionate admirers and followers, speaks of him in these terms: "If my sins do not disable me, I will learn if I can from Cyprian's writings, assisted by his prayers, with what peace and consolation the Lord governed His Church through him."

It is singular that the name of this most eminent Christian leader, who was deservedly held in highest honour in the Churches of his own day, whose posthumous fame is even greater, whose work and influence have been generally so enduring, is connected with the advocacy of one grave error, an error which has been universally condemned in the Church of the West.

In the three Councils of Carthage held under the presidency of Cyprian in the years of quietness, 255 and 256, a prominent question was brought before the assembled bishops of the Province, who numbered in one of their Councils as many as eighty-seven—"Was it right to re-baptise heretics?" The North African Church, under the direction of their great bishop, formally answered the question in the affirmative, denying the validity of baptism not only by heretics but also by schismatics (under schismatics Cyprian included separatist sects like that of the Novatians). On this question, which so seriously agitated the Catholic Church and for a while divided it into two opposing camps, hangs a most important principle, which, owing to the discussions which arose, largely as the result of Cyprian's action, has been happily settled once for all, certainly as far as regards the whole Western Church.* The principle is so weighty a one that it will be worth our while very briefly to discuss it.

To insist upon re-baptism, even though the simple divine ritual† had been complied with, would imply that the grace of the sacrament was given not by virtue of the sacrament, but by the merit of him who ministers it. Generally speaking, the early Church determined *against* any repetition of baptism. This rule was followed by the majority of the early heretics; re-baptism appears to have been practised only among the followers of Marcion. But Cyprian in his contention was supported by some weighty precedents and important authorities. In the middle of the third century

* The Greek Church has taken a middle course, rejecting heretical but admitting schismatical baptism.

† That is to say "with water" in the name of the ever blessed Trinity, as commanded by our Lord Himself.

the point at issue had *not* been formally decided, nor had any substantial agreement on the subject been come to. But such was the generous breadth of the man, that although he was very definite in his teaching here, he never dreamed of severing the connection or of interrupting the communion which existed between his own North African Church and the Churches which he considered to be in error in this matter.

Cyprian apparently rested on the pronouncement of an important Council of some seventy African and Numidian bishops under one of his predecessors, Agrippinus,* *circa* A.D. 213, which had settled the use of the North African Church in this particular. Tertullian, ever a very weighty authority with Cyprian, as might have been expected from the well-known bias of his mind, had some years before declared the re-baptism of heretics to be necessary. Further afield, Cyprian was supported by Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea, the chief see of Cappadocia. Firmilian's was an important opinion. He was not only the chief bishop of a large and important province, but in his day (the middle of the third century) ranked high among the chiefs of Christendom, his name standing first in Eusebius' roll of the great contemporary Church rulers (*H. E.*, vii. 28).

Firmilian, in his letter on this subject, alludes to the Councils of Iconium and Synnada as holding the Cyprianic theory of re-baptism. There were fifty bishops attending the latter of these gatherings. Synnada was an important Phrygian centre. In the Greek see of Alexandria, Dionysius, another bishop of commanding influence in that age, was evidently uncertain on the question, and his ruling on different occasions on this point does not appear to have been consistent. The Alexandrian was a broad and tolerant prelate, and apparently would have left each community to continue to observe its own traditional usage.

* S. Vincent of Lerins (*circa* A.D. 430) writes that this Bishop Agrippinus was the first of all mortals to rule that they who had been baptised by schismatics must be again baptised before they could become Catholics.—*Commonitorium*, 1–6.

But on the other hand, the Church of Rome, in the person of its Bishop, Stephen, knew its mind. Stephen emphatically condemned the practice of ever re-baptising, supposing the divine ritual had been originally adhered to; he asserted that his Church possessed here the apostolic authority of a distinct tradition; and, according to Firmilian, he even went so far as to accuse Cyprian, in his teaching of the necessity of a re-baptism in the cases of heretics and schismatics, of being a false apostle and a treacherous worker.

The conclusion of this sharp and acrimonious dispute on a question which, though it has long ceased to divide Christian theologians, involved a principle of the highest importance, has been admirably summed up by one who has made Cyprian and his work a life-study, and who, while passionately admiring the great bishop, has not allowed this admiration for one instant to cloud his judgment of Cyprian's error. "How great," he suggests, "was the triumph of Stephen of Rome!" The contention of Cyprian "was backed," he reminds us, "by an army of prelates, whom he rather restrained than stimulated, moving as one man to his direction, yet with an independence which threw each upon himself for his argument. . . . No Council assembled to support him (Stephen of Rome); Alexandria (Dionysius) remonstrated, Cappadocia (Firmilian) denounced. His (Stephen's) good cause was marred by uncharity, passion, pretentiousness; yet he triumphed, and in him the Church of Rome triumphed, as she deserved. For she was not the Church of Rome as modern Europe has known her; she was the liberal Church then; the Church whom the Truth made free; the representative of secure latitude, charitable comprehensiveness, considerate regulation."* The *grace of Baptism*, according to Stephen of Rome, *was of Christ, not of the human baptiser*, or as Augustine, a century and a half after Stephen accurately puts it, "Ministers do not confer the grace of the Sacraments, but the Holy Spirit confers it through their ministry." †

* Archbishop Benson, *Cyprian*, viii. 3.

† S. Augustine, *De Baptismo, contra Donatistas*, lib. iv., c. 4; and see, too, *Contra Epist. Parmeniani*, ii. 11.

The great principle at stake defended by Stephen and the Church of Rome, and so hotly discussed in the middle of the third century, was re-affirmed in the closing century of the mediæval period by the Council of Constance (A.D. 1414–1418), when it condemned the error of Wickliffe, who asserted that no bishop or priest in mortal sin could either baptise or consecrate (Session VIII.). The Twenty-sixth Article of the Church of England, based on the Eighth Article of the Confession of Augsburg, reiterates the unanimous opinion of the Western Church when it affirms that "the grace of God's gifts is not diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them, which be effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men."

As regards Cyprian and his dissension with Stephen of Rome, it was quickly ended, for only a few months after Cyprian's third Council held at Carthage, which again re-affirmed his views on the necessity of a new baptism in the case of heretics and schismatics, the persecution of A.D. 257 burst over the Church in many lands. Stephen, his adversary, appears to have been among the first victims of the persecution at Rome. Sixtus, Stephen's successor, in the same sad year also won the martyr's crown, the circumstances of his death being singularly touching. But the feud between Rome and Carthage had already evidently lost its bitterness, for Pontius, Cyprian's faithful deacon and biographer, styles Sixtus "a good and pacific priest."

It is a strong testimony to the greatness of Cyprian and the enduring character of his work that Rome, not always forgiving, has thrown a veil over his contest with Bishop Stephen, and in the golden book of Saints has enrolled the great Carthaginian Master, and even commemorates his memory in the Canon of the Mass.*

* A modern Romanist scholar thus curiously apologises for the generous judgment here of his Church—"How great the guilt of Cyprian (in opposing the Bishop of Rome) had been, is known only to God. His other services, his martyrdom, atoned for it. But who would rely on what Cyprian, in his hour of passion and of error, thought of the *Papal Supremacy?* . . . And, oh! what a warning

The great change which passed over Valerian's policy towards the Christians after the earlier years of his reign is remarkable. In spite of the marked favour he had shown them at the beginning of his reign, suddenly, in the years 257 and 258, cruel persecuting edicts were put forth. These were no doubt suggested by the circumstances of the Empire. What has been graphically termed "The Uprising of the Nations" was being painfully felt. The mighty confederacy of Franks was pouring across Gaul, and even invading Spain. The Allemanni were breaking through the lines of defence on the Rhine and Danube, and were even threatening Italy. The Goths were a terror as far south as Greece; while in the East, Mesopotamia and Syria were swept across by the Persian conquerors, who were soon to defeat and to capture the Roman Emperor himself.

In this period of distress and general national terror the chief adviser and minister of Valerian was that Macrianus whom we have already seen noticed by Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, as chief of the Egyptian Magi, a distinguished soldier and statesman, possessed of vast wealth, who filled the post of Chancellor of the Imperial Exchequer. To his advice is generally attributed Valerian's persecution of the Christians.

Like earlier statesmen, he saw in their attitude towards the Pagan religion an element of disruption, at a time when the solidarity of the Empire was at stake. Hence the first persecuting edict of A.D. 257. Of this edict we do not possess the exact text, but it seemingly had two divisions. The first part simply required that the Christians should sacrifice to the gods of Rome, the second forbade them assembling together or visiting their cemeteries. These hallowed places were sequestrated. Refusal to sacrifice was punished with simple exile, but any attempt to assemble for worship or to visit the proscribed cemeteries was to be punished with death. The bishops and clergy were especially marked out for observation. The edict was put into force generally, and with grave

to us, who have not Cyprian's merit, to shun Cyprian's opposition to this doctrine. *We*, perhaps, might never be allowed the opportunity of recanting."—Peters: *Der eilige Cyprian.*

consequences to the Christian population in such centres as Rome and Alexandria and Carthage. Here, however, we shall confine ourselves to what took place in the last of these and in the great province of which it was the capital.

Cyprian, naturally, from his widespread reputation as a Christian leader, was at once arrested. He made no effort to escape. The *procès-verbal* of his first trial has been preserved. It is a piece of the highest value, and is reckoned by scholars and critics as of undoubted authenticity. We reproduce it, as it doubtless faithfully represents more or less exactly what took place in other important Christian centres in the case of men of rank who were accused of being Christians.

The trial was held in the Audience Hall of the Pro-consul of Africa, Aspasius Paternus. The Roman magistrate began by informing Cyprian that the most sacred Emperors Valerian and Gallienus (the latter had been associated by his father Valerian in the Imperial dignity) had sent him a mandate in which they directed that persons not following the Roman religion should at once conform to the State ceremonials. In consequence of the mandate he should make inquiries as to how the arrested prisoner styled himself.

Cyprian, in his answer, replied: "I am a Christian and a bishop. I know no other gods but the One true God Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them. He is the God whom we Christians wholly serve. Him we pray to, night and day, for ourselves and for the safety of the Emperors."

The Pro-consul: "In this purpose, then, you persevere?"

Cyprian: "A good purpose, formed on the knowledge of God, cannot possibly be altered."

The Pro-consul (sarcastically): "Will it then be possible for you, in compliance with the commands of Valerian and Gallienus, to go at once into exile to the city of Curubis?"

Cyprian: "I depart."

The Pro-consul Paternus further requested Cyprian to give information respecting the Christian presbyters of Carthage. This the bishop refused to do, adding, however, that the presbyters would be found in their several cities.

Paternus rejoined that he would have them found, and then repeated the terms of the Emperor's edict directing that no assemblies of the Christians were to be held, and that they were not to enter into their cemeteries: any who violated the last injunction would be put to death.

Curubis, the city to which Cyprian was banished, was a small, remote town on the sea-board about fifty miles from Carthage, situate in a lonely district. The apparent levity with which Cyprian was treated seems to suggest some doubt in the Pro-consul's mind as to the meaning of the new edict. The death, however, of this important functionary changed the state of affairs, and we shortly hear of the condemnation of nine Numidian bishops, many presbyters, and lay members of both sexes, to the mines, where great sufferings were endured by these true-hearted confessors. No doubt this severity resulted on the disregard shown of the edict forbidding assemblies and prohibiting all visits to the cemeteries; regulations which would have been deeply felt in the Christian communities.

In the following year, 258, another and far severer edict was put out in the name of Valerian and his son. It was felt by the Imperial Government that if any real effect was to be produced harsher measures were necessary.

The new edict of A.D. 258 was the severest and most far-reaching law that had yet been promulgated against Christianity. Three important classes were specially aimed at—(1) The Christian clergy, bishops, priests, deacons, were no longer to be punished with mere exile, but when identified were at once to be put to death; (2) a new law was promulgated which struck exclusively at the higher classes of Romans, so deeply had Christianity permeated the upper stratum of society in the Empire. Senators, nobles (*egregii viri*), and knights who were known to be Christians, were to be mulcted of all their possessions and deprived of their rank. Thus degraded they were to be summoned before the tribunals, and unless they then and there abjured their faith they were to die; noble women, too, were liable to the confiscation of their goods and to exile

and death. (3) The numerous Christian members of "Cæsar's Household," including a vast number of public officials, were to be reduced to the condition of slaves. That such a far-reaching and terrible edict was deemed necessary by the Pagan Government of Rome in A.D. 258 bears a testimony which none can dispute to the enormous progress which the religion of Jesus had made in the upper classes of society in the Empire in the two hundred years which had elapsed between the reigns of Nero and Valerian.

No special mention was made of the mass of the people generally. It was evidently supposed that such a tremendous blow aimed at the Christian leaders, at the higher classes of society, at the official order of the "Household of Cæsar," would be sufficient to stamp out the obnoxious religion.

The edict of the preceding year, which forbade Christians meeting, and deprived the followers of Jesus of their cemeteries, still remained in force, and was of course often acted upon. Although we have evidence that terrible sufferings were endured by the communities of the Brethren in Rome and in Italy, in Egypt and in North Africa, in Gaul and Spain, in Syria and Asia Minor, it is not probable that the sweeping provisions of the edict of A.D. 258 were ever thoroughly put in force, although what was done fell with cruel harshness on uncounted individuals in those various centres. Indeed there was little time to arrange the elaborate machinery necessary for the complete carrying out of a law which would affect so vast a number of notable and even powerful personages; for in less than two years a fresh edict, promulgated in A.D. 260 by Gallienus, Valerian's son, put a sudden end to the persecution.

But in Carthage, which we have selected as our example of an important typical Christian community of the middle of the third century, at the head of which was placed one of the greatest of the earthly members of the Church of Christ, the second of Valerian's edicts was at least in part put into force, and a persecution, sanguinary while it lasted,

harassed the believers* and gave to Cyprian the crown of martyrdom.

As regards the great bishop, we have a perfectly reliable account of his last days contained in one of his letters, in the recital of his faithful deacon, Pontius, and in the official *procès-verbal* of his interrogation by the Pro-consul. The whole story comes down to us without exaggeration, with no improbable admixture of the marvellous.

We have seen how, in the early autumn of A.D. 257, after the first Imperial edict, he was banished to the little sea-coast town of Curubis, some fifty miles from Carthage. Beyond the fact of his exile from his city, he appears to have been under no restraint, and we know he communicated freely with the suffering confessors, who in the course of that year were sent to the mines. But, although Cyprian personally was treated with consideration, he was persuaded that the end for him was near at hand. In the August of the following year, 258, the new edict of Valerian against the Christians was sent out; and perhaps the same messengers who brought him the news told him of the martyrdom of Sixtus and his four deacons, the first fruits of the persecution at Rome. The Pro-consul, Galerius Maximus, who had succeeded Paternus in his high office, at once summoned Cyprian from Curubis to Carthage. There the bishop was permitted to lodge in his own beautiful villa surrounded by gardens, which he had sold for the benefit of his flock, but which had been re-purchased for him by his devoted friends.

The Pro-consul was suffering from sickness, and sent for Cyprian to Utica. But the bishop was determined to die in his own episcopal city, and anticipated the summons, which he was well aware meant *death*, by withdrawing himself into a temporary place of concealment until the Pro-consul should return to Carthage. In these last days of a great life must be dated his beautiful farewell letter, addressed to his presbyters,

* Prudentius has chosen one of the scenes of this persecution in Pro-consular Africa for his theme in the *Peri-Stephanôn*, xiii. 76–87. And Augustine dwells upon it in his 306th sermon, where he speaks of the "Massa Candida" of the martyrs of Utica. He further explains this singular expression. "They were called *Massa* because of their number, and *Candida* from their martyr brightness."

deacons, and people. In it he signified his purpose of returning to his Carthage home as soon as he heard that the Pro-consul had arrived in the capital city; for he said that it was most fitting that a bishop should play the part of a confessor in his own city. The words that were spoken by a bishop at that supreme moment should be heard by his own people who would repeat them again and again. He had even asked God that the scene of his martyrdom, to which he looked forward, might be Carthage. Cyprian evidently hoped, perhaps expected, that he would be specially helped in his utterances in that solemn long-looked-for hour. In view of the new and awful terror which he foresaw coming upon the communities of believers, the Chief Pastor of Carthage felt there was no occasion for burning words of encouragement to martyrdom; he rather inculcated sobriety and calm; no one of his people was to give himself up voluntarily, no one was to utter fierce words of defiance; only after arrest was the accused Christian to speak, and then a higher Power would tell the faithful confessor how to phrase a noble confession.* There was no fear in Cyprian's mind that any "Lapsi," shrinking from a brave confession, would shame the Church of Carthage, as had once been the case in that sad hour of the Decian persecution.

Everything turned out as he had foreseen and provided for; the Pro-consul speedily returned to Carthage, and the confessor bishop at once appeared in his own villa. There, without delay, he was arrested. There was no unmannerly rough treatment of the Christian leader on the part of the Roman officials; his high rank, his stainless reputation, his vast influence and popularity in Carthage and the province, were recognised. But the Roman Government had decided to make him an example, and by striking at so eminent a personage, to terrorise his devoted flock. The second day following the arrest saw the end. The final interrogatory took place in an open court with a colonnade running round

* Cyprian's calm words, here contained in his memorable letter, were: "Nec quisquam vestrum aliquem tumultum fratribus moveat, aut ultro se gentilibus offerat. Apprehensus enim et traditus loqui debet; si quidem in nobis Dominus positus illa hora loquatur, qui nos confiteri magis voluit quam profiteri."—Cyprian: *Ep.* 83.

it in the Prætorium. It was a striking scene in which the majesty of Rome was fitly represented—the Pro-consul of Africa being surrounded with his chief officials; immediately behind the chair of office were the lictors with their rods and axes; before the great magistrate stood a tripod with burning coals, and a box of incense. The prisoner was simply charged with sacrilege. The *procès-verbal* was very brief. We will translate the *Acta Pro-consularia.*

The Pro-consul Galerius: "You are Thascius Cyprianus?"

Cyprian: "I am."

The Pro-consul: "You have permitted yourself to be Pope (or bishop) to persons reckoned sacrilegious?"

Cyprian: "I have."

The Pro-consul: "The most sacred Emperor has directed that you should sacrifice."

Cyprian: "I will not sacrifice."

The Pro-consul: "Think for a moment."

Cyprian: "Do the duty enforced upon you; in so righteous a question there is no room for reflection."

Then after a brief consultation with his Council, the Pro-consul pronounced judgment. The words of Galerius were few and measured, and admirably expressed the policy and views of the Pagan Government. "Your life, Cyprian, has long been a life of sacrilege; you have gathered around you many accomplices in your criminal designs; you have set yourself up as an enemy to the gods of Rome and to their sacred rites; nor have the pious and deeply revered Emperors Valerian and Gallienus been able to bring you back to their religion. Therefore as the upholder of a great crime, as the standard-bearer of the sect, I must now make an example of you in the presence of your associates in guilt. The laws (of the Empire) must be sealed with your blood. Our sentence, therefore, is that Thascius Cyprianus be put to death with the sword."

Cyprian's only rejoiner was: "Thanks be to God."*

* Cf. *Acta pro-consularia S. Cypriani*, 2, 3, 4, 5 (Ruinart); Pontius, *Vita S. Cypriani*, 15, 16, 17, 18; Le Blant, *Les Actes des Martyrs*, p. 230–1; Allard, *Histoire des Persécutions*, vol. iii., chapters i.–iii.; Archbishop Benson,

The glorious end was indeed come for the "standard-bearer" of the Christians, as the Pro-consul had happily styled him. It was a short but triumphal march from the Prætorium to the spot where the doom was to be accomplished. It was to be no secret execution.

The arrest of the loved bishop and his condemnation were soon known to a great crowd of Christian folk. The Roman Governor wished it to be a great example; he had his wish. Guarded closely by a company of the well-known third legion, and followed by a crowd of mourning spectators, Cyprian soon reached the spot where the last scene of this memorable tragedy was to be acted. Quietly the eminent teacher of the Christians took off his upper garments, and, after praying a while, stood upright in his long white linen garment. Then, as it seemed, he waited to see if any message of God came to him to utter; but there was nothing, so he was silent. The executioner arrived, the martyr asked his friends who stood near him to reward the man with a rich guerdon of twenty-five pieces of gold, and with the help of two who were close to him bound a handkerchief over his own eyes. Something in the appearance of Cyprian unnerved the headsman, and he could not strike; then stepping forward the centurion in command of the escort took his place, determining himself to give the death stroke, and with one blow closed the sad scene. "Ita beatus Cyprianus passus est." "Thus the blessed Cyprian suffered" were the simple but pathetic words which closed the "Acta," from which we have largely quoted.

The martyrdom of Cyprian at Carthage in A.D. 258 was the signal for a general persecution in North Africa, in accordance with the provisions of the two edicts of Valerian. In Pro-consular Africa there were many victims, in Numidia even more; in other parts of the Empire the cruel edicts against the Christians were carried out with more or less severity; in Palestine, in Cœle-Syria, in various populous districts of Asia Minor the communities of the believers

S. Cyprian, xi. The *Acta Pro-consularia*, which have been referred to, were older even than the "Life" by Pontius, Cyprian's deacon, who was with him at his death, and from these "Acts" Pontius freely quotes.

counted many martyrs. In Gaul and Spain the edicts were seemingly less rigorously enforced, but even in these distant provinces the Church suffered, though no doubt the invasions or raids of the barbarian tribes to a certain extent occupied the Imperial Government, and secured some immunity for the Christian inhabitants. In Rome the ill-will of the Government was of course conspicuously manifest, and we shall give a somewhat detailed account of the harrying to which the great Christian community in the capital city was subjected in this period of general gloom and distress.

SECTION II.—ROME.

Table of Popes or Bishops of Rome between A.D. 249 and A.D. 260.	Contemporary Roman Emperors.
Fabianus A.D. (236) 250	Decius.
Cornelius . . 251	Gallus.
Lucius . . 252	,,
Stephen . . 253	Valerian.
Sixtus II. . . 257 (or Xystus)	,,
Dionysius . . 258—(269)	Gallienus.

ALTHOUGH, owing to the commanding personality of Cyprian, Carthage and Pro-consular Africa was the chief centre of interest in the stormy period of the general persecutions during the reigns of Decius, Gallus, and through the latter years of the reign of Valerian, some events of considerable interest deserve to be chronicled in the Church of Rome during those eventful years.

We have in Eusebius (*H. E.*, vi. 43) a brief summary, or catalogue, of the staff of the Church of Rome at the time of the Decian persecution; the catalogue runs as follows: "There were (besides the bishop) forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes (clerks), exorcists, readers and janitors, numbering fifty-two; widows, with the afflicted and needy, more than fifteen hundred; all of whom the goodness of God doth support and nourish." The historian then proceeds briefly to allude to the laity of the Roman communion as follows: "There were others who

by the Providence of God were wealthy and opulent, together with an innumerable multitude of all people."

Such a bare summary of the numbers of the officials belonging to the congregations of the capital gives us some idea of the size and importance of the Church of Rome, and also some conception of its elaborate organisation. The bishop was Fabianus, who had been elected some fourteen years before in A.D. 236, eighteen years after the death of Callistus. Tradition says Fabianus was chosen on account of a dove alighting on his head as the election was proceeding. He was a prelate of great power and considerable administrative ability. The elaborate and careful organisation of the community was in great measure his work; his interest in the vast network of the subterranean cemeteries, where so much had been done by Callistus, was sustained, and he is reputed to have done much to improve and beautify them. The head of the Roman Christians in the second quarter of the third century was an important and influential personage in the life of the great city, well known to the official world of the capital. Tradition, too, speaks of him as exercising considerable power with Decius' predecessor, the Emperor Philip, the friend of the Christians. This Bishop Fabianus was at once marked for destruction by Decius, who put him to death, hoping by this act of cruel tyranny to disorganise the community he so dreaded. His flock reverently laid him to rest in the crypt of S. Callistus. De Rossi discovered the fragments of the marble slab which once closed in the narrow cell where the body of the martyred bishop had been entombed. The name Fabianus was deciphered on the slab, with the letters annexed, telling of his rank and noble martyr end.

We possess the letter addressed by Cyprian of Carthage to the presbyters and deacons of Rome, in which he acknowledges their letter containing the particulars of the glorious close of Fabianus' life, and expresses his own joy that so upright a career had been so fitly crowned. The glory of such a death, said the African Master, is reflected upon his Church; such an example set by the bishop is a strong

incentive to a similar brave resistance on the part of his brethren for their Faith's sake.

After an interval of a year and some months, a delay occasioned by the severity of the persecution, which no doubt prevented any formal assembling of the Faithful in Rome, Cornelius, who probably belonged to the well-known patrician family of that name, was elected in the room of the martyred Fabianus. The new bishop had passed through every order and office in his church, and was generally respected and revered. His pontificate was short and troubled; banished, not long after his election, from Rome to Civita Vecchia, he soon died in his exile. No doubt his death was hastened by the harsh treatment experienced by him in his place of banishment, for he is reckoned as a martyr, and is spoken of as such by his friend and contemporary Cyprian of Carthage, although no record of a violent death in his case is preserved to us.

The body of Cornelius was brought back to his own city of Rome and laid, not in the historical Papal crypt of the cemetery of S. Callistus, where most of his predecessors had been buried since the beginning of the third century, but in an adjoining catacomb where were the graves of other Christian members of that proud patrician house to which he apparently belonged. De Rossi has discovered his sepulchre; the broken pieces of the marble tablet, which once closed up the deep niche wherein originally was placed a sarcophagus containing his remains, have been pieced together; and the inscription in Latin, graven in Roman characters, can be clearly read: *Cornelius Martyr. Ep.* The Latin tongue was probably used instead of the ordinary Greek, the official language of the Roman Church, the illustrious family to which the bishop belonged preferring Latin as more fitting for a noble Roman's grave. The sarcophagus was probably of somewhat later date than A.D. 253, the remains in the first instance having been apparently at first laid in a simpler grave.

The tomb of this bishop has been the scene of many a pilgrimage. Pope Damasus, in the fourth century, restored the chapel where Cornelius lay, and arranged a special staircase

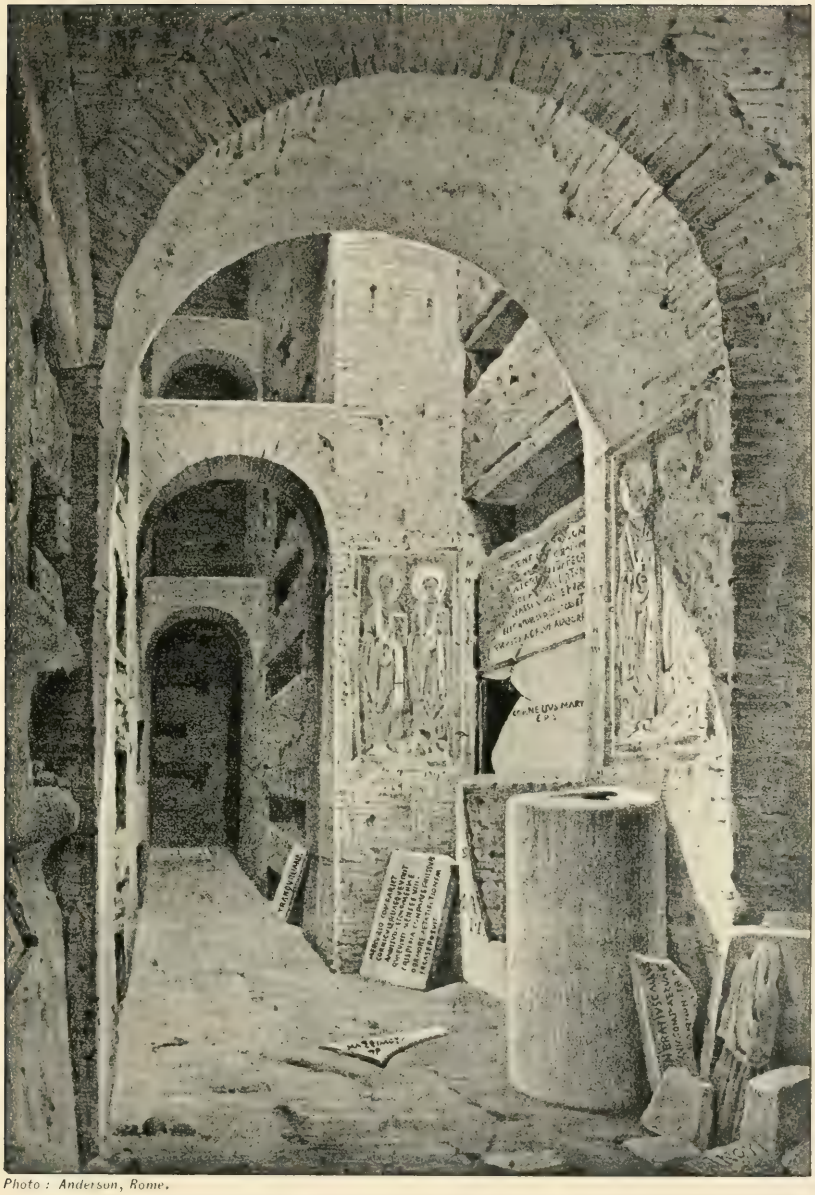


Photo : Anderson, Rome.

A SEPULCHRAL CHAMBER IN THE CEMETERY OF LUCINA

Connected with the Cemetery of S. Callistus, restored by Pope Damasus. It contains the tomb of S. Cornelius A.D. 251). The paintings of S. Cornelius and S. Cyprian are of the Eighth Century.

for pilgrims. It was injured by the Lombard invaders in their hunt for treasure or relics. In the ninth century Pope Leo III. once more restored it and painted on its dark walls the figures of Cornelius and his friend Cyprian, on which picture, dim and scarred by time, the twentieth century pilgrim may still gaze.

We have described the grave scandals at Carthage which arose owing to the number of "Lapsi"—Christians who, in the persecution of Decius, coming after the long peace of the Church, fell away in the hour of trial; the same sad falling away was noticeable at Rome and in other great centres of population. The settlement of Cyprian in the all-important question of reconciling these "Lapsi" to the Church, and of restoring them, when thoroughly penitent, to communion, was followed generally by Rome and by the whole Church. But at Rome there was a violent opposition to the merciful and gracious view of a temporary weakness of members of the flock of Christ taken by the bishop and the large majority of the rulers of the Christian community. This opposition was headed by a presbyter of great ability but of eccentric disposition, named Novatian.

During the vacancy of the see after the martyrdom of Fabian, this Novatian exercised great influence at Rome. He seems to have expected to have been chosen bishop, although he vehemently protested that he did not desire the position. At all events, after the election of Cornelius, a schism was formed, and Novatian was consecrated to the Episcopate by three obscure Bishops. Novatian and his party held that the Church had no power of granting absolution to the "Lapsi," and was bound to exclude them for ever from communion. He sent notice of his consecration as schismatical bishop of Rome to many of the greater churches, but his claim was generally ignored. His vigorous opinions, however, on the subject of the "Lapsi" found many adherents, especially in the West; and his sentence of lifelong exclusion from all Church communion, which, in the first place, had been confined to those only who had fallen away, was subsequently extended to all who after baptism were guilty of any grave

sin. The followers of Novatian styled themselves Puritans (Cathari); they even went so far as to re-baptise proselytes from the Church, whose lax discipline they deemed imperfect and impure. On other points the followers of Novatian were orthodox.

This schism, which first arose at Rome in the Decian persecution, did not die out for a long time. In parts of the east, *e.g.* in Phrygia, the Novatians united with the Montanists. There was a remnant of them in certain places even as late as the latter years of the sixth century.

On the death of Cornelius in exile, Lucius was elected Bishop of Rome in A.D. 252. A solitary letter addressed to him by Cyprian is extant. Lucius appears to have been immediately banished by the Imperial Government. In this letter Cyprian consoles the exile by telling him that he has the prayers of the Church of Carthage that the crown he had already won by a noble confession might be perfected—Cyprian probably meant by a glorious martyrdom for the Name. But Lucius was not called to suffer a violent death; for he was recalled from his banishment in the beginning of Valerian's reign, and, on his return, died almost immediately. He was laid with his predecessors in the sacred Papal crypt in the Callistus cemetery, and the broken slab of marble which once veiled his last resting-place has been discovered, simply bearing his name, *Λουκις*, graved in Greek characters.

It was during the persecution of Valerian, *circa* A.D. 258, when all assemblies in cemeteries were sternly forbidden, that some of the curious work of "earthing up," the destruction of staircases communicating with the different catacomb galleries in Rome which has of late years been observed, was carried out; and at the same time many secret entrances and exits were skilfully contrived. One curious and deeply interesting account of a terrible catacomb scene of martyrdom deserves special mention. *Circa* A.D. 257, in the course of the Valerian persecution, two well-known Christians, a husband and wife, named Chrysanthus and Daria, were buried alive in one of the cemeteries beneath the Via Salaria Nova on the north-east of the city. In the course of the following

year, disregarding the stern edict, which forbade any such gatherings under a death penalty, a number of Christians assembled in the labyrinthine recesses of the great arenaria (or sand pit) adjoining the cemetery, where the two revered martyrs had met their death. This devout company of believers were in the act of partaking of the Holy Eucharist, when they were surprised by a party of legionaries, who were employed in the work of detecting these proscribed assemblies. The legionaries with little difficulty closed up the exits of the arenaria, and by piling up a great heap of sand and stones literally buried alive the numerous band of worshippers, who thus perished. In the following century when Pope Damasus was busied in restoring and putting in order some of the more celebrated burying places in the catacombs, his officials came upon the sad relics of this entombed company of worshippers. There, lying amidst the remains, were the holy vessels which they had taken down with them for the celebration of the sacred communion rite. Pope Damasus would not touch these pathetic memorials of an age of suffering. He simply set up one of his well-known inscriptions telling the story, and opened a window in the adjacent wall or rock in order that pilgrims might see without disturbing "this monument of a glorious past so unique of its kind, this Christian Pompeii in miniature." These touching relics of suffering believers, whom death had overtaken while they were in the very act of prayer, were seen by pilgrims in the sixth century, when Gregory of Tours wrote.*

To return to our list of Roman bishops. When Lucius'

* De Rossi saw good reason to hope that further investigations might bring to light this striking spot, perhaps the very window itself which Damasus constructed, through which the pilgrims once gazed, "assisting, as it were, at a solemn Eucharist celebrated in the third century." De Rossi's words are: "Cette espérance est fondée; j'oserais presque dire, elle sera remplie."—*Rome dans sa grandeur*, t. ii., p. 6.

The martyrdom of SS. Chrysanthus and Daria, which preceded the striking and pathetic wholesale martyrdom above related, is usually dated A.D. 284, in the reign of the Emperor Numerian. But scholars, such as Tillemont and others, and, later, Allard, consider that this tragic event belongs to the Valerian persecution, a quarter of a century earlier. (*Cf.* the exhaustive note of Allard, *Hist. des Persécutions*, vol. iii., ch. ii.–iii., pp. 46–7.)

brief career was closed, Stephen was elected bishop, *circa* A.D. 253.* Considerable interest is attached to this pontificate, owing to the haughty claims made by Stephen to a very definite supremacy in the Church. These claims were evidently resisted by Cyprian and practically ignored by Firmilian, the famous bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, whose high position among the prelates of the middle of the third century has been already alluded to; and the claim of Rome was also ignored by many other bishops of this period.

It is indisputable that Cyprian, who during these troublous times occupied the foremost position in the Christian Church, accorded to the Roman see a position of inherited precedency, but at the same time resisted her claim to dictate her will to other and independent churches. Stephen, however, was not content with an acknowledgment of an undefined supremacy, and there is little doubt that during his pontificate the relations between him and the church of North Africa, with its powerful phalanx of bishops, were severely strained. Nor were his relations with many of the Eastern bishops by any means of a friendly nature, although the alleged fact of his positively severing his communion with these oriental prelates is uncertain. After the death of Stephen, the more conciliatory policy of his successor, Sixtus II. (Xystus), seems to have restored the harmony between Rome and the provincial churches which had been seriously imperilled by Stephen's arbitrary conduct.

The character of Bishop Stephen of Rome has been variously painted. Jeremy Taylor's estimate, which represents him as a zealous and furious person, has perhaps too largely influenced modern opinion, for it has been well remarked † by the latest scholarly student of Cyprian, an enthusiastic admirer of the great Carthaginian leader who ever resisted Stephen's assumption of authority, that "we must not forget that Stephen's portrait is made up of traits etched in scraps by the pen of an adversary, that Dionysius, the revered bishop

* The exact date is a little uncertain; some historians fix it in the spring of the following year, A.D. 254.

† Archbishop Benson: *S. Cyprian*, vii. 3.

of Alexandria, on the other hand, makes grateful mention of his (Stephen's) liberality to the churches of Syria and Arabia, and that to Vincent of Lerins there floated across two centuries a tradition of modesty as well as zeal, of faith as well as dignity."

The story of the long controversy of Stephen with Cyprian on the question, "Should heretics be re-baptised?" has been told with some little detail in the previous section which dealt with Cyprian. It was seemingly an anxious dispute. On the one side stood the foremost man of the Christian world, one, too, who was greatly loved as he was universally revered; behind him were councils composed of many bishops. The Eastern church sympathised with, even if it did not directly support him; Alexandria with her bishop, though on the whole neutral, was inclined to be with him. Stephen of Rome had few friends; his arrogance and want of charity alienated many a foreign church; but his teaching and the tradition of his metropolitan church triumphed in the long run, and the unanimous voice of the Catholic Church, after the original disputants had passed away, has pronounced that the unpopular Stephen was right, and the loved Cyprian wrong. The issue of this great controversy, which for a brief season threatened to rend the Church asunder, has no doubt been one of the unacknowledged factors which, in the coming ages, powerfully contributed to consolidate the claim of Rome to being the depository of unerring apostolic authority.

Stephen died in the late summer of A.D. 257. A somewhat vague tradition says he too won a martyr's crown in the course of Valerian's persecution. He was followed by Sixtus II. (Xystus), who was a teacher of learning and power, and evidently, from the kindly reference to him by Pontius, Cyprian's dear friend and biographer, was a gentle and conciliatory prelate. The circumstances of Sixtus' death in A.D. 258 are strangely pathetic.

In defiance of the Imperial edict forbidding Christian meetings, the Roman bishop and small companies of believers continued to worship together in the secret recesses of some of the less famous cemeteries. In one of these, the catacomb

of Prætextatus, Sixtus and a band of devoted Christians were surprised by a company of legionaries. When the soldiers entered the dark and narrow chapel of the catacomb, Sixtus was preaching. The bishop and the attendant clergy were at once hurried away and brought before one of the city Prefects, who was always on duty at the time deciding the fate of the many arrested Christians. Sixtus was condemned to be beheaded on the spot where he was taken. Once more brought to the little chapel in the cemetery of Prætextatus, he quietly placed himself on his rough stone chair and, bowing his head, he received the death blow; with him were executed four of his deacons.

Laurence, his senior deacon, so runs the beautiful story, was not present when his chief was arrested, but hurried at once to bid him farewell. "Whither goest thou, my father, without thy son?" "I shall not forsake you," replied Sixtus. "Do not mourn me; yet greater trials are before thee, and thou wilt follow me in three days." The prophecy was literally fulfilled. Laurence was summoned at once by the Prefect of the city, and, as the confidential minister of the martyred bishop, commanded to give up the treasures which belonged to the Church. These, of course, largely consisted in the sacred Eucharistic vessels. The deacon asked for a brief space to enable him to collect and make a list of the Church's treasures. On the morrow he appeared again before the Prefect, followed by a crowd of poor Christian folk who had been helped by the brethren. "Here," said Laurence, "are the treasures of the Church, for which you were enquiring." The angry magistrate condemned Laurence, who thus dared to brave the Roman power, to be burned alive. Common tradition speaks of him as having been roasted to death on a gridiron, his persecutors hoping that the agonising tortures would induce him to reveal the secret of the Church's suqposed treasures. Several other members of the Roman clergy suffered death with the deacon Laurence. These are only a few notable examples of the many Roman sufferers in this period of storm and stress, the persecution at Rome in A.D. 258 being memorable for its extreme severity. But

S. LAURENCE BEFORE THE JUDGE.

From the Fresco by Fra Angelico in the Chapel of S. Nicholas at the Vatican.

no memory of that noble martyr army has been so revered as has that of Laurence. The stately basilica on the Via Tiburtina rises over the first little simple memoria erected above his tomb; four other churches in the Eternal City are dedicated to him; there is, besides, scarcely a city in Christendom but contains a church or altar bearing his loved name. In Genoa the cathedral, in Spain the Escurial, preserve the honoured memory of S. Laurence, the friend of Bishop Sixtus, deacon and martyr.*

The campaign in the East, A.D. 260, closed the reign of Valerian, who had issued the edicts for the bitter persecutions under which perished Cyprian, Sixtus II. of Rome, his deacon, Laurence, and so many of the noblest Christians whose names are unwritten in the Church's martyrology. Sapor, the Persian king, defeated the Imperial forces, and captured the Emperor Valerian, who never reappeared. Tradition speaks of unheard-of indignities being suffered by the hapless Roman Emperor at the hands of the Persian conqueror. Gallienus, his son, who had been before associated in the Empire, now reigned alone. At once the persecution at Rome, and in those provinces where the edicts of Valerian ran, ceased. Not only was all harrying of the followers of Jesus stayed, but an Imperial edict restored the confiscated churches, cemeteries, and property to the Christian communities. This great and sudden change in the fortunes of the Church is attributed to the influence of Salonina, the

* There are no extant Acts of S. Laurence; the simple beautiful story above related is only based upon an old tradition, but the tradition is as old as S. Ambrose, who lived within a hundred years of the events in question. S. Ambrose gives it *twice;* a very few years later S. Augustine quotes it in four of his sermons; Prudentius, the Christian poet of the second half of the fourth century, adopts the story as the theme of one of his poems in the *Peri-Stephanôn* (11).

The position Laurence occupied among the Roman clergy was a high and responsible one; as first deacon he had the chief charge of the church funds, and administered the large charities of the Roman community at home and abroad; he was also placed over the cemeteries (or catacombs); very frequently the first deacon succeeded the bishop in his high office. De Rossi, *Inscriptiones Christianæ Urbis Romæ*, i. 115; *Roma Sotterranea*, iii. 46; and Allard, *Hist. des Persécutions*, iii. 2.

Empress of Gallienus. Salonina was the devoted disciple of Plotinus, the Neo-Platonic philosopher. For more than half a century, at intervals, the influence of princesses at the Palatine had been marked. The teaching of Plotinus had led the Empress to the borderland of Christianity, and eventually, it is probable, she became actually a Christian. The Christian inscription which runs round some of Salonina's medals, "Augusta in pace," seems to indicate the conversion to Christianity of the Princess. At all events her influence was exerted in favour of the Church, and the result was the gracious and generous edict we have just spoken of. In Rome, and over most of the West, including Italy, Gaul, Spain, and Britain, the Christians at once enjoyed a period of quietness and toleration. In the East, where the authority of Gallienus was largely opposed, persecution, more or less severe, continued.

SECTION III.—THE ROMAN EMPERORS.

THE character of Gallienus was a strange combination of brilliance and incompetence; rarely accomplished, he was utterly neglectful of all the higher functions of a great ruler. The awful woes of the vast Empire over which he bore sway touched him but lightly. Lazy, and utterly indifferent to all duties, civil and military, he contented himself with a life of dissolute pleasure in his splendid capital. The period of his reign was, perhaps, the most disastrous yet chronicled in the many-coloured pages of the eventful story of Rome. We have already briefly noticed the terrible inroads of the barbarians, notably of the Goths and Allemanni in the Western Provinces, and of the Persians in the East, in the latter years of Valerian. During the dreary period of the reign of his son the vast dominions of Rome seemed to be rapidly crumbling to pieces. Nor were affairs at home more promising. The "Augustan History" tells us that in this gloomy reign a group of pretenders to the throne, mostly soldiers of fortune, rose and fell in the various provinces of the Empire. In the pages of that useful and interesting,

and generally reliable, chronicle these rebel claimants to what in every instance proved to be "a bloody purple"—for they all fell in turn victims to their ill-placed ambition—are termed the "Thirty Tyrants." The number is as misleading as the appellation. At most these short-lived pretenders only numbered nineteen. But their revolts were fatal to all settled government, and the sufferings of the hapless provincials, harried by the formidable barbarian raiders, were enormously increased by the state of perpetual unrest and internal warfare resulting from these continued and partly successful revolts. To add to the general misery and desolation, between the years 250 and 265 a furious and fatal plague raged almost continuously in every province and every city throughout the Empire. We have dwelt already, it will be remembered, on its terrible ravages in Alexandria and Carthage. The historian of the *Decline and Fall*, commenting on the misery of these sad years, goes so far as to suggest that "barbarian invasions, internal revolt and war, and the unchecked pestilence, had consumed in these fatal years the moiety of the human species.*

In A.D. 268 the Emperor Gallienus, alarmed, at length, by the presence in the home province of Italy of a formidable pretender, Aureolus, general of the legions of the Upper Danube, roused himself from his strange indifference and apathy, and placing himself at the head of the army of Rome advanced into north Italy to meet the rebel. He besieged the pretender in Milan, but received a mortal wound in a night attack. Dying, he nominated as his successor Claudius, one of his generals, or, at least, Claudius claimed to have been so nominated. This successor of Gallienus was unmistakably an officer of rare merit and of conspicuous ability.

The fortunes of the Empire now brightened. Under Claudius and his immediate successors, men of high genius, of resolute courage and determination, equally able in civil matters and in military command, the pressing dangers from foreign and home enemies were warded off, a succession of

* Gibbon: *Decline and Fall*, chap. x. 3.

splendid victories drove back the swarming hordes of barbarians, a wise restoration of something of the ancient discipline was also introduced into the legions. Claudius, Aurelian, Probus, and Diocletian, who in the next thirty years wore the Imperial purple, have deservedly been styled the restorers of the Roman world. But during most of this period of renovation the story of the Christians is a most gloomy one, and the pages of the Christian chronicles are filled with the recitals of terrible sufferings which the followers of Jesus were called upon to endure, especially in Rome and the home provinces. It was their last trial—the last effort of Paganism.

Claudius II. reigned from A.D. 268–70. This Emperor is famous in history for the reforms he inaugurated in the waning discipline of his Roman armies, and for a crushing defeat which he inflicted on the Goths in Northern Greece, thereby freeing the Empire for a long season from perhaps the most formidable of the barbarian invaders. Owing to this conspicuous success he has been generally known as Claudius Gothicus. It is a disputed point among ecclesiastical historians whether or no Christians were persecuted in this short "military" reign. On the one hand, there is no mention of any persecution in the pages of Eusebius or of the less known writers, Orosius and Sulpicius Severus. On the other, a long, sad catalogue of sufferings appear in martyrologies and in a few Acts of martyrs purporting to speak of this reign. These "pieces" are undoubtedly late, but it is difficult to conclude that the traditions upon which they are based would have specified the reign of Claudius as the date of these sufferings if it had been a time of general quietness for the Church. It seems most probable that the persecution referred to was largely confined to Rome and Italy, and that it was owing to popular discontent rather than to any special edict of the Emperor. Among the victims whom the martyrologies mention are the wife and daughter of the son of the Emperor Decius, who had been associated with his father.

Claudius died, very shortly after his great victory, of the plague at Sirmium; recommending Aurelian, one of his most famous generals, as a fitting successor. Aurelian was a great

soldier. The son of a small peasant proprietor in the neighbourhood of Sirmium and of one of the inferior priestesses of the Sirmium temple of Mithras, he had passed through all the grades of the military service, and was distinguished equally for his dauntless valour and for his consummate military skill. He rose rapidly in his career. Valerian made him Consul. A senator of the first rank adopted him and gave him his daughter in marriage, and the choice of the dying Emperor Claudius nominating him his successor was with rare unanimity generally ratified. He reigned scarcely five years, from A.D. 270–5; but they were years of almost unbroken triumph. In his successive campaigns the power of the marauding Goths, shattered by the great victory of Claudius, was completely broken. The Marcomanni and other Teuton tribes who threatened Italy were routed, and the two formidable competitors who had assumed sovereign power—Tetricus in the West, over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, and Zenobia, the all-accomplished Palmyrene Queen, in the East, over Syria and the adjacent provinces — were completely crushed; and in Aurelian's splendid triumph at Rome, in A.D. 274, Tetricus and Queen Zenobia were the most conspicuous figures in the stately procession of the victorious Emperor. Nor was Aurelian merely a most successful general; he was also a great military reformer. His fame and the deep respect in which he was held enabled him to complete his predecessor Claudius' work of restoring discipline in the great armies which Rome had to maintain for her defence. The stern though just regulations which he published as to the discipline and conduct of his legions have deservedly won for this great soldier the admiration of posterity.

But the Christian subjects of the Empire found in Aurelian a deadly foe. In the long drawn-out combat between Paganism and Christianity, too often the Christian found his most determined enemy in the person of a really great Emperor, such as Aurelian, rather than in a weak and vacillating prince

* Allard, *Hist. des Persécutions*, iii., chap. v. This latest historian follows Tillemont's conclusions here, who writes: "Claude fut un cruel persécuteur, selon les martyrologies et quelques actes que nous en avons."—*Memoires*, t. iv.

given up to luxury and self-indulgence, as was Gallienus. Nor is it difficult to explain this apparently contradictory experience. We have already dwelt upon the strength and power of Paganism. The more distinguished men who wore the purple loved Rome, and were intensely persuaded that the existence of the mighty Empire and the continuance of her sovereign power depended upon the unity of the religion professed by the many peoples who made up the Roman world; these many peoples were largely welded together by the acknowledgment of the common religion professed by the Emperor, the Senate, and the Imperial Magistrates. This apparent unity, as we have seen, was only broken by the Christian sect, which, as generation succeeded generation, ever growing in numbers and increasing in influence, absolutely refused to share in the state cult.

The policy of the State never varied in its view that the presence of these Christians was a grave and a constant and increasing danger; and when a great and patriotic Emperor, like Marcus in the second century, and Aurelian in the third, was at the helm of public affairs, the head of the State gave effect to the Roman policy, which, however wrongly, regarded Christianity as the sleepless enemy of the Empire, and essayed by means of a persecution, more or less severe, to crush the ever-present, and as it seemed to the Roman rulers, dangerous Christian sect.

Relying, perhaps, too much on the contemptuous indifference of some well-known classic writers for the popular idol-worship of Rome; dwelling too deeply on the presentment of this cult in the often shameful but still graceful pictures painted by some of the best-known classic poets of the lives and pursuits of the "Immortals," whose magnificent temples adorned the historic Forum of the metropolis, and proudly towered over the great thoroughfares of Rome and of the powerful centres of population in the provinces; posterity after the long combat between Paganism and Christianity was over, has not estimated aright the vast power which Roman Paganism exercised over the hearts of men. We must be allowed to reiterate this point, which, though of the utmost

importance in the great struggle of Christianity with Paganism, is too often overlooked or neglected. It appears and reappears, be it remembered, with startling force at different periods of the struggle. We dwelt on it at some length when the persecuting policy of the noble Emperor Marcus was under consideration. With Marcus and his advisers the persecution of Christians was evidently a matter of conscience. So also was it with Aurelian.

Aurelian was something more than a great soldier. His mother, as we have said, was a priestess of Mithras; and from her, and from his early training and associations, the Emperor probably derived those views of religion which so powerfully influenced his life during his brief but brilliant reign over the Roman world. To him, as to Marcus, the religion of Rome was something more than the official cult, the pledge of Roman unity; it possessed evidently a living reality. To such a sovereign, at once an earnest, even a fanatical Pagan, and a stern military disciplinarian, the Christian, who not only refused to share in the popular religion but positively loathed the objects of the popular cult, was at once a rebel to constituted authority and a standing menace to the State. Early in his reign his estimate of the followers of Jesus, with whose existence and influence he was evidently well acquainted, appeared in his words to the Senate on the occasion of a grave alarm occasioned by a success in the field of a formidable Teuton host of Marcomanni. Aurelian urged that the Senate should at once consult the dread Sibylline books—a step rarely taken — when they hesitated. He wrote to them thus: "Why, Conscript Fathers, do you hesitate? One would suppose you assembled in a Christian church, and not in the temple of all the gods. Take courage, I adjure you by the holiness of the Pontiffs, by the sacredness of the Rulers help your Prince in his hour of need! Let the Sibylline books be searched, and whatever they suggest, let it be done. Are captive victims from all nations required for offerings, or merely strange wild animals? All these I will undertake to produce, for there is surely no shame in being conquerors with the Immortals fighting on our

side. This is the way in which our fathers went to war."*

The special object of his devotions, whom he hoped to see the centre of the Roman cult, was Mithras, around whose sacred shrine his earliest memories were grouped The extraordinary popularity of the Mithras worship in Rome and in other great centres, from the earlier years of the second century onwards, has been already noticed. Originally a Persian deity, Mithras, a word which signifies "the friend," was adored as the god of the bright heaven and of the day. This worship was formally introduced by Trajan, *circa* A.D. 100, and developed under Commodus, *circa* A.D. 190, and, though not at first, was subsequently identified before the time of Aurelian with that of the sun. As practised in Rome and the West, this worship was accompanied with an elaborate and attractive popular ritual; Mithras was regarded as at once sun-god and fire-god, the life-giver and the source of purification. Some scholars consider the worship of Mithras at Rome as an accommodation of the primitive worship of Nature, so admired by Augustus and Virgil, to the growing voices of conscience, which, unacknowledged and perhaps unsuspected, were due to the influences of Christianity.

Among the rites and teachings of the cult were many strange customs and doctrines, seemingly borrowed from Christian worship and teaching, such as baptism, redemption by blood, the oblation of bread and wine, the sacred common repast.

But here in these outward symbolic ordinances and ritual observances, the resemblance to Christianity ceased. Upon the votaries of the Persian deity no precepts bearing on the higher, purer life seem to have been inculcated. There was no self-denial, no austere virtue, no need for purity pressed home to the worshippers at the fashionable and favourite shrines.

This was the deity especially adored by Aurelian. To Mithras, among the crowd of Italian and foreign deities adored in Rome, he specially addressed his prayers. When, for instance,

* *Historiæ Augustæ Scriptores, Aurelian in Vopiscus*, 20.

Valerian told him he had put him forward for the high dignity of Consul, Aurelian, already a famous general, replied: "May the gods, and particularly the Sun, influence the Senate to think thus favourably of me"* ("Dii faciant, et deus certus Sol, ut Senatus de me sic judicet").

After the great triumph which celebrated his victories over Zenobia in the East, and Tetricus in the West, Aurelian, as an enduring memorial of his conquests and of the restoration of the Empire to something of its ancient grandeur, erected on the Quirinal hill a temple of Mithras, or the Sun, which he proposed should surpass in its costly magnificence all the stately shrines of Rome. It was adorned with the spoils of his Eastern campaign, and its treasury was filled, it is said, with gold and gems of an incalculable value. In the "cella," or inmost shrine, arose two statues of the Sun-god, the one bearing the Western form of Apollo, the other the Eastern image of Baal. On some of the coins of Aurelian runs the inscription, "The Sun, Lord of the Roman Empire" ("Sol Dominus Imperi Romani").

To the favour of the gods of Rome, and especially to the protection of Mithras, the sun-god, whom the Romans had long admitted into the circle of the immortals they adored, Aurelian attributed the successful issue of his striking campaigns. To such an Emperor, the stern exclusiveness of his Christian subjects, who coldly stood aloof from all the gorgeous pageantry with which he honoured the gods who, he believed, protected with their all-powerful aid his successful efforts for the restoration of the Empire, was simple disloyalty. Such impious men, in the eyes of Aurelian, were a veritable danger to the unity of the State. Under such a ruler, great in peace as in war, the popular dislike of the Christians grew in intensity. But the active persecution of the Christians which marked this reign only seems to have been carried on in real earnest in the closing months of his life. It is clear that in the early portions of his reign the edict of Gallienus restoring the ecclesiastical buildings and cemeteries, which had been confiscated by Valerian, to the Church, was still

* *Historiæ Augustæ Scriptores, Aurelian in Vopiscus*, 14.

considered to be in force; for we have an account of a curious petition made to Aurelian against Paul of Samosata, somewhile Bishop of Antioch, who had been condemned as a heretic by a formal council. Paul of Samosata, in spite of the decision of the council, persisted in retaining possession of the Antioch church buildings; and the Emperor, as representing the civil authorities, was appealed to by the Catholic Bishop of Antioch to compel the recalcitrant to give up these possessions.

It was a singular step, based, of course, upon the edict of Gallienus which formally restored to the Church all her possessions, and it is a striking proof of the recognised position of the Church at this time. Aurelian declined to give judgment himself, but referred the case to the Bishops of Italy, and especially to the Bishop of Rome, who were to decide it. (Eus., *H. E.* vii. 30.)

The policy, however, of Aurelian towards the Christians in the latter portion of his reign, as might have been expected from his known zeal for the worship of the gods, gradually changed. That he always disliked and mistrusted them is clear, as is shown in his words above quoted to the Senate, when the question of consulting the Sibylline books came before them. And that this dislike and mistrust eventually passed into open persecution is evident. Eusebius (*H. E.* vii. 30) thus in a few words describes the change which passed over Aurelian's policy towards the Church. "In the progress of his reign he began to entertain different views concerning us, and at length, under the influences of certain advisers, he went on to arrange a persecution against us. And the rumour of this was now everywhere abroad." The formal edict, the text of which is lost, but which Lactantius characterises as "bloody," ordering a general persecution, was not issued till the latter months of A.D. 274. But probably harsh and severe measures were taken against the worshippers of Jesus some time before the general edict was promulgated. For tradition speaks especially of many martyrs having perished in the well-known cities of Gaul in the course of the reign of Aurelian; notably in Lyons, Auxerre, Autun, and

Sens. The "passions" of these saints unfortunately are of comparatively later date; evidently written, or more accurately re-written and redacted, long after the events which they purport to chronicle had taken place; and therefore they cannot be used in any sense as authentic pieces of history. That some of them certainly were based on earlier and probably contemporary memoranda is at all events probable But we can only speak of their evidence as "traditionary." Similar "passions," or "acts," of martyrs in Aurelian's reign in different parts of Italy which have come down to us are equally untrustworthy,* and can only be referred to by the serious historian as tradition.

The "bloody" edict, however, ordering a general persecution, which was issued towards the close of A.D. 274, had but a short time to run, for the great Pagan Emperor was assassinated in the spring of the following year, A.D. 275 There were, however, some seven months of interregnum before the election of Aurelian's successor, Tacitus, during which the edict of the late Emperor was, no doubt, generally in force.

After the death of Aurelian, A.D. 275, the Church historian only needs to touch with a light hand the story of the next nine or ten years. Then after A.D. 285 his task will become heavier as he chronicles the last terrible struggle of Paganism with Christianity. Aurelian was assassinated by a favourite general, one Mucapor, in a military conspiracy, and for seven months the Empire was without a master. It says much for the wise policy of Aurelian that no rebellion or disturbances in Rome or the provinces seem to have ruffled the peace of the State. The legions under the new discipline inaugurated by the two last Emperors dutifully left the choice of a new master of the Roman world to the Senate, who after some delay nominated an aged and illus-

* Allard, *Hist. des Persécutions*, iii., ch. v., 111, examines at some length these "acts" and "passions," and discusses their various values as pieces of reliable history. The French scholar, writing in the later years of the nineteenth century, considers some of these pieces as embodying a definite tradition, or as based upon ancient documents.

trious member of their body. Tacitus, the object of their choice, reluctantly accepted the purple, but only survived his elevation some six or seven months, dying in one of the frontier camps. The immediate cause of his death is unknown.

A famous and successful soldier, Probus, was saluted Emperor by the legions of Asia as successor to Tacitus, and save for the claim to the throne by a brother of the late sovereign, a claim soon set aside, Probus was generally accepted by the Roman world as its master.

His reign, A.D. 276–282, a period of nearly six years, is famous in the annals of the Empire for the vigorous and successful campaigns against the barbarian hordes which were threatening again most of its fairest provinces.

By far the most conspicuous of his great military successes was the clearing of Gaul, with its many wealthy cities, of the invaders who were once more sweeping through and desolating the land and its prosperous towns. These savage hordes were driven back by Probus into their native wilds, and Gaul was for a time—but only for a time—completely cleared of them. By the year 281, thanks to the unresting energy and military skill of this great soldier Emperor, the Empire of Rome found itself at peace within and without; and a triumph, notable among the many triumphs of Rome for its splendour, celebrated the return to Italy of the successful commander. In the year following this triumph, strange to say in the very midst of his legions, who for the most part idolised their brilliant general, he was murdered by some discontented soldiers. His Prætorian Prefect Carus was chosen by the victorious soldiers as his successor. Tillemont (*Histoire des Empereurs*, t. iii.) strikingly writes of the condition of the Roman world in this year, A.D. 282, as follows: "After the unhappy reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, the Empire, which had been gradually raised once more under the rule of Claudius II., Aurelian, and Tacitus, under Probus had reached a position of grandeur so lofty that its decadence became almost certain." Carus, though a capable soldier and a man of acknowledged ability, seems as an

Emperor to have disappointed the public expectation. The writer of his biography in the "Augustan History" (Vopiscus) is doubtful whether to classify him among the good or the evil sovereigns of Rome. He certainly left behind him a reputation for cruel austerity.

Once more the Empire was threatened on various sides with barbarians, who were emboldened by the news of the sudden death of the conqueror Probus. After obtaining some marked successes on the western frontier, Carus, at the head of a powerful force, marched into Asia and signally defeated the Persians, driving them even from distant Mesopotamia. But in the midst of his triumphant Eastern campaign he perished—as some say struck by lightning in a terrific storm, as others, perhaps with greater probability, suspect, assassinated like so many of his predecessors in a military conspiracy.

The Roman army at once retreated from the scenes of its victorious progress in Persia. Carus had previously associated in the Empire his two sons, Carinus and Numerian. The brothers, on the death of their father, were universally acknowledged as Emperors. Carinus had been left in Rome. Numerian had accompanied Carus in his Eastern expedition. The brothers were very different in character. Numerian was an accomplished prince, a poet, and an orator of no mean capacity; in quieter times he would at least have been a respectable if not a distinguished ruler; but his genial, amiable virtues were insufficient for the occupancy of a throne where marked military qualities were pre-eminently necessary. He never returned with the army, which, after the death of Carus, abandoning its victorious campaign in distant Persia, retraced its steps westwards. A dark mystery attended the close of his short reign. His father-in-law, Aper, the Prætorian Prefect, was charged with being his murderer, and was put to death by the hands of Diocletian, captain of the Imperial bodyguard, who was saluted as Emperor. Carinus, who had been left in Rome, during his brief reign displayed all the worst characteristics of the vilest Emperors who had worn the purple—a heartless profligate and a selfish

pleasure-lover, he utterly failed as a ruler. His favourites and Ministers he selected from the lowest and most degraded of the people, whose passions he flattered and amused by the most gorgeous and extravagant theatrical displays.

These popular games, already in the reigns of the great military Emperors who preceded him, had been celebrated with an extravagance unknown even in the days of Nero.* The magnificence of Carinus here surpassed all that Rome had ever seen.

This infamous Emperor, in the midst of his guilty pleasure-filled life at Rome, was aroused by the news of the approach of Diocletian, the choice of the legions of the East, at the head of the powerful army which had fought in the late Persian campaign. Carinus, under the circumstances of personal pressing danger, developed somewhat unexpected courage and capacity. The opposing forces met in Mœsia in the Danube country. At first it seemed probable that Carinus would succeed in establishing his power, and that Diocletian would be driven back; but the civil war was unexpectedly brought to an end by the assassination of Carinus by one of his own officers whom he had foully wronged. Without any further bloodshed, the rival Emperor Diocletian was acknowledged by both the armies; widespread consciousness of his ability and tactfulness secured a general acquiescence in his assumption of the throne of the Empire. The date of Carinus' death and the accession of Diocletian was the late spring of the year 285.

During the nine years which elapsed between the death of Aurelian and the accession of Diocletian we possess but scanty materials for any accurate picture of the condition of Christians in the Empire. The edict of persecution issued towards the end of Aurelian's reign was certainly unrenewed, but it is probable that the state of unrest, so largely augumented by the strong anti-Christian policy of the great Aurelian, continued.

The brief barbarian-harassed reigns of Tacitus, of Carus and

* Under Probus, for instance, we read of as many as a hundred lions and as many lionesses, three hundred bears, and two hundred leopards being massacred in one day in the Roman amphitheatre, as well as a far greater number of less costly beasts, such as ostriches, stags, and wild boars.

his two sons, the longer but completely war-filled period of Probus, gave little opportunity to the enemies of the Christians for developing any organised attacks on their religion. The "acts" of martyrdom which have come down to us of this period are few, and in their present form are certainly not contemporary records. The "acts" of SS. Trophimus and Sabbazius purport to speak of events which took place in A. D. 281, the last year of the reign of Probus, in the Phrygian Antioch, and relates the arrest of certain Christians, and the tortures and martyrdoms which followed in consequence of the resolute refusal of the confessors to sacrifice; but these are reported to have been brought about, not in the course of any general persecution, not even on the report of an informer, but solely on account of some imprudent exclamation of disgust uttered by the Christians in question at the sight of some of the wild and noisy rites carried on publicly in honour of some probably local deity. As these "acts" seem probably to have been based on contemporary memoranda of the scene, we can fairly infer that under Probus, at least in Asia Minor, there was no general persecution, no special encouragement even held out to informers, but that if the profession of Christianity were brought home to any citizen, the magistrate, if hostile to the sect, could punish the offender with torture and death. Probably this was the general condition of Christians in most parts of the Empire at this period.

The "acts and passion" of the famous soldier-martyr Sebastian treat of the period covered by the short reign of Carinus. The story is an interesting one, and has enjoyed considerable popularity from very early times, but the recital, as we have it, is evidently not a contemporary record, though a wide-spread tradition points clearly to an historical basis for the story.

Far more reliable as a contemporary piece are the "Acts" of "the disputation between Archelaus, Bishop of Mesopotamia, and the heresiarch Manes" * in the reign of the Emperor Probus. The chief city of the see of Archelaus was Carrhae, a city of

* This "piece," which contains also an account of the death of Manes, was cited by Epiphanius, Jerome, and Cyril of Jerusalem. Without positively affirming its authenticity, the evidence in favour of this most ancient writing being a contemporary record is very strong. Allard, usually very careful in such cases, accepts it as a genuine and probably contemporary writing.

Osrhoene, a district in the north-west of Mesopotamia. In this ancient "piece" we read of the cruel and brutal treatment of a large company of Christian pilgrims by the legionaries of the Roman garrison of Carrhae. In an apparently unprovoked onslaught many Christians were killed, more were wounded and severely injured, and the rest would probably have been sold for slaves but for the charity of a generous Christian named Marcellus, who relieved and ransomed them at his own charges. Such an incidental notice, occurring as it does in a "piece" of literary importance, a position undoubtedly occupied by the "disputation" in question, tells us how slightingly and cheaply the lives of Christians were estimated at times by the great Roman armies of the days of Probus (A. D. 276–282).

In the same interesting record is contained the earliest trustworthy account of Manes the heresiarch, the first teacher of that wide-spread and enduring heresy known as Manichaeism. Manes, the founder of the sect which subsequently bore his name, appears to have been originally a slave, carefully educated by his Persian mistress in all kinds of oriental lore. His theological system was a curious mixture of some of the Gnostic errors, *e.g.* the two co-equal conflicting principles of good and evil, the eternity of matter, which was regarded as essentially evil, all coloured with a certain amount of Christian teaching. One of the marked tenets of the sect was a strong aversion to the Old Testament as the work of a wicked spirit. Another was the unreality of the suffering Christ. *Circa* A.D. 277, when Probus was reigning, Manes, who had some time before incurred the displeasure of Sapor, King of Persia, probably owing to his success in assembling round him a considerable body of disciples, escaped from the prison where he had been confined for several years. A public disputation was arranged between Manes and Archelaus, the Mesopotamian Bishop. Archelaus was pronounced by the arbitrators of the disputation victorious, and the heresiarch, we read, with difficulty escaped with his life from the indignant bystanders. Shortly afterwards, Manes fell again into the hands of the Persians, who put him to death. His skin, stuffed with straw, was exposed for a long period on the walls of Ctesiphon.

But his wild, half poetic, half rationalistic theory of Christianity, with its mythic machinery, largely derived from the old Gnostic speculations, and Gnostic asceticism, long survived its ill-fated author. It seems to have possessed a strange fascination of its own. Manichaeism was heard of soon after Manes' death in North Africa. A little more than a century and a quarter later, Augustine tells us the sect was numerous in Italy and in Africa, and that its poison had affected secretly even some of the clergy. It appeared and reappeared at different times all through the Christian ages. Time, which spread usually a mantle of forgetfulness over most ancient errors and fancies of the human brain, seems to have had no effect here; for as late as the twelfth century, in parts of Europe, Manichaeism was taught openly and undisguised. The chief seat of these opinions was the south of France; a long drawn out and terrible religious war scarcely stamped out the enduring results of the teaching of the half-crazed Persian enthusiast.

CHAPTER XIV.

DIOCLETIAN.

SECTION I.—FIRST PERIOD: DIOCLETIAN AND MAXIMIAN.

THE reader of this history cannot fail to have noticed how in the later chapters more and ever more in detail the chief political events of the Empire are dwelt upon. In the earlier years of Christianity these details were unnecessary. For a very considerable period the religion of Jesus was generally ignored by the State, except when forced upon its notice. Gradually the position changed. In the third century, certainly, the Church had, through the vast numbers of its members, its influence, its wide-spread organisation, become a power with which statesmen had to reckon. The policy which the Imperial Government at different times should elect to pursue in the case of these numerous dissentients from the State religion had become an anxious and debatable question, and we have seen how this policy was constantly changing. In the next period, the close of the third and the beginning of the fourth centuries, the great religious question, the relations of Paganism and Christianity, had become the most pressing, the most momentous, of all questions of State policy. Indeed, to use the words of a serious historian of our own day and time, it would seem as though the scene of the world drama had been cleared of all other actors—only two of importance remained on the stage, the Pagan Empire and the Church.

Diocletian, the Emperor, whose policy changed the whole aspect of the Roman world, first comes before us as avenging the murder of the young Emperor Numerian, by slaying his father-in-law, Arrius Aper, the Prætorian Prefect. After

the assassination of Carinus, the brother of the slain Numerian, this Diocletian, a well known and popular general, who had lately filled the responsible post of captain of the Imperial body-guard, was acknowledged universally as Master of the Roman world.

The son of slave parents, the new Emperor, whose talents were undoubted, had raised himself through the various military grades, and had been successively Governor of Mœsia, Consul, and Commander of the Imperial guards. He had given ample proof of his capacity in the highest military and civil posts.

Lactantius, indeed, in some half-dozen passages, affirms that as a soldier he was somewhat timid and lacked daring.* But as a statesman skilled in the choice of fitting instruments to carry out his policy, Diocletian was undoubtedly far-seeing and wise, whatever estimate may be formed of the policy itself. Unlike many of his predecessors, he inaugurated his reign, not by murdering or conniving at the murder of the reigning Emperor, but by slaying the murderer of the sovereign with his own hand. This act may be said to have won the people to his side.

Firmly seated on the world's throne, he resolved to break up in some degree the "unity" of the Empire, which he felt was becoming a constant peril to all settled government. There had been, as a rule, one Emperor on whom all depended, and one city which was the centre of the Roman world. The successful revolts and assassinations in the thirty or forty years preceding the accession of Diocletian, had been terribly numerous. This danger he sought to avert by multiplying Emperors and by creating various cities which, in power and prestige, should rival the immemorial capital. By this means he proposed to render a successful revolt well-nigh impossible, and an Imperial assassination useless; and thus a security long unknown in the Empire would be provided for the

* Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, chap. xiii., referring to Lactantius' *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, here somewhat scornfully rejects this testimony. He refers only to two of these references of Lactantius; there are, however, other references to the same effect. The estimate given above is probably accurate.

existing government. He inaugurated his new policy by associating a partner with him on the throne, and subsequently by increasing the number of Imperial partners from two to four. Thus, if in one division of the Roman world an ambitious general or official proposed to seize the throne by the murder of its occupant, he would probably be deterred from his purpose when he remembered that three more partners in the throne in other parts of the Roman world, partners in the Imperial authority closely knit together by various ties, would have to be reckoned with.

Again Diocletian felt that the Empire was so enormous, and so dangerously threatened on all sides by barbarian tribes more or less powerful and numerous, that the constant presence of an Emperor on, or comparatively near, a frontier of the vast realm was needed for the public security. It was not sufficient that the chief of the State should successfully keep at bay the Persians on the banks of the Euphrates, when the Goths or the Alemanni, at an enormous distance from the Imperial headquarters on the Euphrates, might at any moment imperil the Empire on the banks of the Danube and the Rhine.

His first choice of a colleague, from these points of view, was successful. He associated with himself Maximian. The "associated" Emperor, like Diocletian, was of low birth and not an Italian. He was merely a rough soldier; but if he lacked the gifts of a really great general, it is certain that he possessed indomitable energy, conspicuous bravery, and splendid perseverance. His campaigns were generally successful, but he was known as a stern and cruel ruler, a curious contrast to his more courtly and gentle statesman-colleague, to whom, however, though so different in temper and character, he was ever loyal and devoted. Carrying out the spirit of his contemplated change in the administration of the Empire, Diocletian resided at Nicomedia, which became the centre of the government of the East. The city was well chosen, on an arm of the sea of Marmora. It was a good place of arms in the neighbourhood of the Black Sea, comparatively speaking within easy distance both of the Tigris and the lower Danube, the natural highways of approach for some

of the more formidable of the restless enemies of the Empire. This city, as his chosen residence and the seat of his government, he lavishly adorned with costly buildings, such as befitted the capital of the Roman Empire of the East. But the choice boded ill for the future of the Christians, since it was a famous and even a fanatical seat of Paganism. Maximian's metropolis was Milan, in North Italy; Rome was thus deserted by the Imperial Court, and lost its immemorial rank and much of its prestige, while the august Senate, which, even under the rule of the roughest military despots, retained at least the semblance of its ancient dignity and privileges, now sank almost into the position of the Municipal Council, of a city no longer the official metropolis of the Roman world. The associated Emperors assumed respectively the Pagan titles of Jovius and Herculius, investing themselves with the insignia of the King of the Gods, and of the strongest warrior in the ranks of the Immortals, an evil omen for their Christian subjects.

Another striking change in the Constitution of the Empire was carried out by the policy of Diocletian. The absolute masters of the Roman world who had preceded him had veiled their enormous power under the ancient titles belonging to the officials of the old Republic, carefully avoiding the title of king and rejecting the kingly ornament of the diadem, the ensign of royal sovereignty. The only special title which Augustus and his successors assumed was that of "Imperator," which was originally a military term denoting the highest rank in the army. Diocletian introduced the magnificent ceremonial of the Persian court, assuming the diadem of a king, an ornament obnoxious to the Roman spirit as an ensign of royalty. The mediæval and modern idea of royalty in the nations of the West was really introduced by Diocletian, when "the organisation which this sovereign gave to his new Court attached less honour and distinction to rank than to services performed towards the members of the Imperial family." The apologists of the revolution in the ancient Roman constitution worked by Diocletian are careful in their reiteration that these changes were prompted, not by any

love of ostentation or vain show, but by a persuasion that all this magnificence and adulation would promote obedience and order among the many peoples and nationalities grouped together under the name of Romans.

What, then, was the position of Christians, now so numerous, under this great statesman-Emperor, and what were the circumstances which gradually led up to that tremendous outburst of systematic persecution with which this reign will ever be associated? In the first place it is clear that the mind of the Emperor, for several years after his accession, was not made up as to the policy he should adopt towards this large and influential body of his subjects. In these earlier years there is no doubt that great influence was exercised in the Court of Diocletian in favour of Christianity by a number of the Palace officials, who made no secret of their Christian profession. At the head of this Christian party were the wife and daughter of the Emperor, Prisca and Valeria, who were Christians, at least occupying the position of catechumens. Christian officials in the Palace were tolerated, and were possibly regarded with some favour at first by Diocletian, who even nominated members of the "Sect" to governorships and important magistracies in the provinces, dispensing such Christian nominees from the necessity of sharing in the public sacrificial rites, as indeed some among his more tolerant predecessors had already done.

But alongside this toleration or even favour, there seems to have been instances early in the reign of Diocletian when the sovereign allowed the old laws of the State, still unrepealed, to be acted upon in the case of open hostility on the part of Christians to Paganism. The curious and interesting "Passion of S. Genesius," * the scene of which was laid in Rome, belongs to the early years of Diocletian. If this piece be accepted as genuine, it indicates that the severest punishments were, at

* Tillemont, commenting upon this beautiful piece, calls attention to its simplicity and apparent truthfulness, and considers it reliable and authentic—"une pièce que sa simplicité rend aimable et fait juger tout à fait fidèle" (tom. iv., *Mémoires* S. Genése). Allard, *Persécution de Dioclétien*, i. 1 (1898), accepts this "Passion of S. Genesius" as containing "des détails précis et suffisament sûrs."

all events occasionally, still meted out to Christian professors. Whilst Diocletian in the first partition of the Empire took the Eastern division of the Roman world under his especial government, the Western provinces passed at once under the rule of his colleague, Maximian Herculius.

The kindly toleration, which perhaps save in a few instances in the beginning of his reign, was showed by Diocletian to members of the Christian sect does not appear to have been the policy of Maximian. Between the years 286 and 291–2 there was not indeed any general persecution of the "Sect"; but the general testimony of ecclesiastical tradition preserved in the "Acts of Martyrs," treating of this period, tells us that in the provinces subject to Maximian, especially in that vast division of the West known as Gaul, much Christian blood was shed, and many sufferings were evidently endured.

In A.D. 286 a serious revolt broke out in Gaul; not a revolt in the ordinary sense of the word as usually understood in the Rome of that age, of legionaries who had chosen some favourite commander to replace the reigning Emperor; but a general uprising of the peasants, the descendants of the old Celtic inhabitants of the land, against the oppressions of the Gallo-Roman nobles who had gradually reduced these people into a state of miserable servitude. To restore this great division of the Empire once more to a state of law and order was Maximian's first important task. It was on his march from Italy to Gaul that the famous bloody episode of the Theban Legion is said to have taken place.

A portion of the army of Maximian on its march had encamped in the valley of Agaunum, some little distance from the Leman Lake, in the district now known as "Valais." A body of soldiers, called in the story "The Theban Legion,"* but probably, in fact, a cohort mainly recruited in the Thebaid

* The numbers usually given are evidently exaggerated. We must remember that Eucherius' account, truthful though it seems on the whole, had come to him through two persons, neither of them eye-witnesses. A Legion would certainly denote several thousands. It must be borne in mind, too, that the names of only three officers of the company are preserved, one of whom was Maurice, the martyr always associated with the deed of blood.

district of Egypt and forming part of the Imperial forces, happened to be earnest Christians.

This Theban contingent declined to take part in a solemn sacrificial ceremony arranged by Maximian, who desired to propitiate the gods and to win their assistance in the dangerous campaign on which he was about to enter. The superstitious Emperor, bitterly incensed at this refusal of the Thebaid contingent to share in the solemn Pagan rites he had arranged, treated the refusal not only as an act of special impiety towards the gods of Rome, but as a grave infraction of discipline, and condemned the cohort in question to the terrible military penalty of decimation.* The punishment had no effect. The Christian soldiers still resolutely refused to take part in the solemn idolatrous rites arranged by the Emperor. Again Maximian decimated the brave soldier-confessors. In spite of the chastisement they still stood firm. The cruel Emperor, upon their reiterated refusal, ordered a massacre of the whole band. Under the orders of their captain, a devoted Christian named Maurice, they offered no resistance, and the whole cohort was cut down.

The terrible story comes to us in a letter of Eucherius, Bishop of Lyons, A.D. 435–50, written to a brother bishop, one Salvius, scarcely a century and a half after the martyrdom. The letter of Eucherius is evidently an authentic document; the evidence upon which he bases his narrative is very definite. He had learned the story of the martyrdom from Isaac, Bishop of Geneva, who received it from Theodorus, Bishop (from A.D. 349) of Octodurum, a city only a few miles distant from Agaunum. Theodorus is a known personality in ecclesiastical history, and was present at the Council of Aquileia in A.D. 381. He, as Tillemont remarks, might well have learned the particulars of the dread event from eye-witnesses of the scene of carnage.

When Eucherius wrote, the basilica erected over the grave of these martyrs for the faith was still standing in Agaunum;†

* The detachment so punished drew lots, and every tenth soldier, after having been scourged, suffered decapitation in the presence of his comrades.

† The modern name of the city of Agaunum is "Saint Maurice," the name the commander of the Theban cohort. In the sixth century, and even earlier, we

numerous pilgrims from distant lands were still in the habit of visiting the shrine; and a tradition of miracles performed in behalf of these devout pilgrim-worshippers hung round the hallowed spot. The one debatable point in Eucherius' letter is that he placed the massacre of these Christian soldiers in the period of the great persecution of Diocletian, which burst out a few years later than the probable date of the occurrence.

But such a mistake of a very few years is easily accounted for. It would be natural enough for a non-critical writer to class such an event among the many awful incidents of the great persecution which harried the Christians in all parts of the Empire so soon after the Agaunum tragedy.

The authenticity of the story has been much contested by critics who have made much of the silence of the ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius, Lactantius, Sulpicius Severus, and Orosius, and of the Christian poet Prudentius. Of these, by far the most conspicuous, Eusebius, dwells in detail upon the martyrs of the Eastern portion of the Empire alone. Many scenes of martyrdom in the West are passed over in his history, for reasons to be discussed later. Lactantius again describes the persecutors rather than the persecuted, and gives us only a general picture of the persecution, indulging in comparatively few details. Sulpicius Severus and Orosius do not profess to treat of these events in detail. The Spanish poet Prudentius largely confines his hymns and poems to Spanish confessors, and a few of the more conspicuous Roman martyrdoms. The "silence" of these writers here cannot invalidate the clear simple testimony of Bishop Eucherius, supported as it is by a widespread tradition

have various references to the martyrdom of the "Theban Legion," as, for instance, amongst others in the Martyrology of S. Jerome, S. Gregory of Tours refers to it. S. Maurice, the chief officer of the band, has been ever honoured as the patron saint of the "Valais," and various churches in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, etc., bear his name. The ancient royal House of Savoy, the present rulers of Italy, from very early times adopted Maurice as the patron saint of their famous family. When the Canton of Valais ceased to form part of the dominion of the House of Savoy, half of the hallowed relics of the martyrs of the "Theban Legion" were translated with great ceremony to Turin and deposited in the Cathedral there; this was in A.D. 1581.

which has left its mark deep and broad in the country where the event is related to have taken place.

We have, therefore, treated it as actual history; with Tillemont, Ruinart, and many other serious writers. In later times Allard, the French scholar, in his learned and exhaustive "History of the Persecutions," writing in the last years of the nineteenth century, after a long and searching examination of the evidence for this tragic event, unhesitatingly accepts it as an important piece of authentic history; considering that the bitter animosity undoubtedly shown by Maximian to Christianity in Gaul in the years immediately following the Agaunum tragedy was largely owing to the bitter feeling excited in his mind by the Legion's resolute defiance of orders; implying in his view that the Christians were disloyal to the Empire and its immemorial policy. This animosity was displayed during his residence in Gaul between 286 and 292, while Diocletian in the East was still tolerating, if not favouring, the sect.

There are various "Acts of Martyrs" extant purporting to treat of this persecution. These "Acts," however, are not contemporary, and have suffered much from legendary interpolations; but they have a general value as proving that the Christians in Gaul did undergo considerable sufferings—fitfully, perhaps, and without the promulgation of any special edict. The existing edicts gave handles enough if the authorities chose to act on them.

The "Acts" in question speak of persecution under Maximian's authority in the districts round Paris (Lutetia), in the west at Nantes, in the north at Amiens and Beauvais, in the north-east at Soissons and Rheims, in the south at Agen and Marseilles. The traditional martyrdom of S. Alban in Britain belongs to this same date, and is usually placed *circa* A.D. 286.

In the Eastern provinces of the Empire, during these six years, the position of Christians was generally favourable. The influence of the Palace officials, and of the wife and daughter of Diocletian, no doubt contributed to this policy. Christianity in the districts directly under Diocletian's rule

was exceptionally strong, both in the numbers* and in the position of its votaries. As we have noticed in some of our earlier sections Asia Minor and its wealthy cities, from the last quarter of the first century onwards, was peculiarly the home of the worshippers of Jesus.

We have several times had occasion to dwell upon the fact that under the Emperors who were not unfavourable to Christianity many Christian citizens were permitted to fill various civic offices, every facility being given to them to discharge such functions without sharing in any public acknowledgment of the religion of the state; while the policy of the rulers of the Church generally made such a sharing in public duties easy and practicable to the members of Christian communities. The Canons of the well-known early Council of the Church, Illiberis† (Elvira, in the province of Spanish Granada), throw considerable light on this point, and give us some definite information respecting the inner life of the Catholic communities at the time.

In this Council, Canons were passed in which the position of members of the community occupying various municipal offices of importance is gravely considered; without directly approving the undertaking the duties of such public functions the Church distinctly contemplates such cases as not of unfrequent occurrence, and is careful not to discourage them by too

* It is not, of course, possible to give any exact account of the number of Christians in the Empire at the period of the breaking out of the last and most terrible of the persecutions in A.D. 302–3. We can only give an approximation of the numbers. The total population of the whole Empire at this period is generally estimated at about a hundred millions. In the East the Christians were decidedly more numerous than in the West, and scholars have estimated that in the provinces of Asia Minor and the East about a tenth of the population were Christians; in the Western provinces about a fifteenth. On the whole, it would seem not an unreasonable supposition to estimate the Christian population of the Empire at the end of the third century at about seven to nine millions. The expressions, however, of Tertullian, cited above (p. 232), even allowing for rhetorical exaggeration, would seem to require a much larger estimate.

† The exact date of the Council of Illiberis or Eliberis (Elvira) has been much disputed; that usually given is *circa* A.D. 303–4, but a somewhat earlier date is more probable, before the great persecution. The period of comparative quietness between A.D. 286 and A.D. 292, and the general position of the Church in the Empire, best fits in with the state of things described in the Canons of this Council.

severe penalties. For instance, if the garlands and insignia of priests of the temple are required to be worn on certain occasions by the civic functionaries in question, these Christian office-bearers are to be separated from communion for two years, and during their year of office are not to enter a church. It is to be observed that the Christians who undertook municipal offices never actually sacrificed or gave public games, but instead defrayed the cost of some work of public utility, such as the building of a bridge or basilica, or the making of a road. In some cases the distribution of a sum of money was substituted for the costly show in the amphitheatre. It must be borne in mind, too, that the general temper of this Illiberis Council in which nineteen Bishops and twenty-six priests sat, was most austere, resembling in the strictness of some of its Canons a Puritan or Novatian, rather than a Catholic Council; which renders the fact of the imposition of these comparatively light penances still more remarkable. The formal decisions arrived at in such a Council as that of Illiberis emphatically show that, in the period immediately preceding the final terrible persecution, the general policy of the heads of the Church in relation to the State was still that which had been laid down by the Church of Rome in opposition to Tertullian and Hippolytus.

The proceedings of this same famous Illiberis Council give us various details respecting another phase of the inner life of the Church at the close of the third century. Historians have been too ready to attribute to the Christian communities a general spirit of laxity and worldliness at this particular period, basing their unfavourable conclusions chiefly on some expressions of Eusebius (*H. E.*, viii. 1). But the careful enumeration of the faults and errors which existed in the Christian Society of the time, as reported in the proceedings of this austere Council, demonstrate to us how high was the ideal proposed and taught by responsible Catholic teachers. Such severity would not have been possible if the offenders particularised had been numerous in the communities, or if public Christian opinion had in any way countenanced such laxity in ordinary life. Indeed, the resolute and noble stand made by the Christians generally in the East and West when

the persecution broke out in the first part of the fourth century is a plain contradiction to any such supposition.

In the earlier years of Diocletian's reign the Christian communities, apparently for the first time, ventured in many cities to build important churches, and to call in the aid of art to decorate and beautify their homes of prayer and praise. One of the Canons of the Spanish Council to which we have been referring alludes to this last somewhat novel innovation * in terms of stern reprobation.

Whilst, however, in the provinces, and particularly in the Eastern cities, a false sense of security lived in the many communities, in Rome a haunting sense of the extreme precariousness of the position seems to have brooded over the Church. There, far more conspicuously than in any other centre of the Empire, Paganism was a visible power, with its splendid ritual, its stately temples, its immemorial traditions. There the worship of the immortals preserved its time-honoured intimate connection with the ceremonials of the Senate and the chief magistrates of the Empire, who were shorn of their ancient power, but who still preserved the outward and visible insignia of their long inherited dignity.

In Rome during the years of stillness which preceded the great storm, the chiefs of the Christian community, instead of erecting and adorning new and large churches, as seems to have been the case in many of the provincial centres, busied themselves rather in their subterranean city of the dead,† preparing quiet sanctuaries where they might meet for prayer

* The paintings and decoration of the catacombs of course date from a much earlier period; but with a few exceptions these catacomb paintings were of a simple unobtrusive character. It would seem that the churches which arose in the latter years of the third century were adorned in a much more ambitious way.

† Much of the catacomb work, according to De Rossi, especially in the adaptation of corridors and sepulchral chambers for worship, belongs to the last quarter of the third century, and particularly to the earlier days of Diocletian's reign. Allard (*Persécution de Dioclétien*, vol. i., chaps. i.–xi.) quotes from a Latin Mass of this period a solemn prayer which evidently looks forward to a time of peril, probably near at hand, in which the ministering priest prays God *for a heart which will continue to serve Him truly if "quietness" still smiles on the Church, but which will not deny Him if the day of temptation comes on the Church* (Si quies adrideat, te colere, si temptatio ingruat non negare).

and communion in those darker times which they felt might and probably would soon come upon them again.

The attitude of Paganism when the last and most formidable attack ever made on Christianity was imminent, had greatly changed in the half century which preceded the accession of Diocletian. We have already called attention to the silent reformation which had permeated the old beliefs. There is no doubt that the new teaching was in large measure derived from Christianity, whose great influence had made itself felt in all the centres of the Empire; a strange and novel monotheism was gradually but surely taking the place of the multiplicity of objects of worship enshrined in the old college of immortals —"The Universal Deity of the East, the sun, to the philosophic was the emblem or representative, to the vulgar the Deity."* In some places the sun was worshipped under the name of Apollo, more frequently as Mithras, the purifying fire; in Egypt as Serapis, in Syria as Baal. The many gods of the older world were curiously placed in the new Pagan teaching on a lower platform, and, if adored at all, were worshipped as subordinate spirits or dæmons. It is true that Diocletian clung outwardly to the old cult when he adopted the title of Jovius, and induced his colleague in the Empire to style himself after the hero-god as Herculius. But when in the famous scene in the camp of the murdered Numerian he slew the factious præfect Aper, it was to the sun-god he solemnly appealed when he asserted his innocence of the murder before the assembled army of Rome; and later we shall see, when the question of persecution or no persecution of the Christian peoples was in the balance, the same statesman-Emperor betook himself, not to the priests of Jupiter, but to the oracle of Apollo, the sun-god of Miletus, for advice upon the tremendous question at issue.

Nor was this Pagan Monotheism without its effect on Christianity; attempts seem seriously to have been made in various quarters to bring about an understanding between the two religions, and it is said that some Christians here and there were induced to make common cause with their

* Dean Milman: *Hist. of Christianity*, Vol. II., Book II., Chap. IX.

Pagan foes and their new presentment of their cult. But only a very few were led into the devious paths of this new Paganism; the great majority were steadfast to the faith for which so many of their fathers had given up life and all that seems to make life pleasant and dear, and for which they too were soon to be called to make a like sacrifice.

In line with the Neo-Paganism, with the religion of the State, the cult professed by the bulk of the official classes, by the patrician order, and by the vast majority* of the people in the years immediately preceding, and during the period of the deadly conflict, outwardly at least were ranged the philosophers of the time; not a very distinguished or powerful group, but one which, through their bitter and incisive writings against Christianity, exercised a not inconsiderable influence on the side of Paganism. This group of philosophers is generally known as the Neo-Platonists. They had existed as a school of teachers for some half a century when Diocletian ascended the throne of the Cæsars, and their principal representative during Diocletian's reign was Porphyry.

Porphyry and his fellow teachers had really very little in common with the new Paganism of the day, still less were they in sympathy with the older Paganism of the Empire; indeed, Porphyry is reported to have said that "the older conceptions of God are such that it is more impious to share them than it is to slight the images of the gods." But in spite of such a contemptuous estimate of the old Roman cult, he supported the cause of every old national religion, and the ceremonial duties of its adherents. Of Christianity, however, there is no doubt that he was the sleepless opponent. He professed to admire the moral beauty and the holiness of the founder of Christianity, but he condemned with a tireless pen the people who worshipped Him as their God with what seemed to him a strange inexplicable

* We have already discussed the probable numbers of Christians in the Empire under Diocletian and his colleague, and it will be remembered that we put them as about seven to nine millions out of a population numbering roughly a hundred millions. Thus the expression "The vast majority of the people" is fairly justified.

passion of devotion. He was a great student of the sacred writings of the Old and New Testament, but with the one object of undermining their testimony and destroying their enormous and abiding influence. He failed completely, as we shall see, in all his efforts directed against Christianity; as others have in like manner signally failed who in later ages have been inspired by Porphyry's spirit, and have imitated Porphyry's methods.*

Porphyry's example as a writer against Christianity was followed by other members of the school, whose works, as far as we are able to gauge, were coloured with an extraordinary bitterness against the religion of Jesus. Indeed, one of the most prominent of these philosophic scholars, Hierocles, has been by some considered as the prompter of the great persecution.

SECTION II.—SECOND PERIOD: THE DIVIDED EMPIRE.

THE five or six years' experience of the results of dividing the Imperial dignity and responsibilities had been on the whole fairly successful, and during these years no further barbarian invasion of any serious importance had disturbed the Empire; but in A.D. 291 threatened raids or revolts on many sides

* Allard, *Persécution de Dioclétien*, I., i., 2, ii., has some very interesting and suggestive comparisons between the great Pagan philosopher of the last age of Paganism, and some well-known modern adverse critics of Christianity. "Porphyre serait 'le Renan' du paganisme. . . . Sa critique parait d'hier; il affirme que les prophéties de Daniel ont été écrites après coup, puisque l'événement les montre accomplies. . . . Le nouveau Testament est particulièrement passé au crible. Comme fera Strauss, il s'efforce de montrer des contradictions, des inexactitudes, des invraisemblances. S'élevant parfois à des vues plus hardies, il devance l'école de Tubingue en mettant en lumière le prétendu antagonisme de S. Pierre et de S. Paul. Par le souvenir de la fortune qu'ont eue de nos jours cette recherche des antinomies, ou ces hautaines affirmations, accompagnées parfois d'hommages attendris à la personne de Jésus séparé de ses disciples et de son œuvre, on se rendra compte de l'effet que les quinze livres de Porphyre doivent produire sur l'opinion des contemporains." Porphyry's great work here referred to, his fifteen books "against the Christians," was destroyed. It was condemned by an edict of the Emperor Theodosius II., A.D. 448, and even the answers to it by men like Eusebius, Apollinaris, etc., have been lost. But we possess copious extracts from it in Lactantius, Augustine, Jerome, etc. This famous anti-Christian philosopher was born at Tyre *circa* A.D. 233 and died *circa* A.D. 303.

imperatively called for the presence of an Emperor and an army on each frontier. Diocletian determined in 292 to enlarge further his plan of government by the association of two more sovereign princes under the title of Cæsars, who were attached in a subordinate capacity to the two senior Emperors, styled "Augusti." The Cæsars were to enjoy the right of succession to the Augusti, and thus the ever-recurring danger of a popular or tumultuary election of an Emperor was at least minimised.

The choice of Diocletian fell on two distinguished soldiers, both trained in the military school of Aurelian and Probus; Galerius, who became attached to his Eastern portion of the Empire; and Constantius, surnamed Chlorus (the pale), who assumed the position of the Assistant-Emperor to Maximian in the West. Galerius was peasant-born, and had risen to high rank owing to his military capacity. He was rough, cruel, ignorant, and masterful, though at the same time he was acknowledged to be an able and successful general. Constantius Chlorus, on the other hand, while a brilliant soldier, loved peace, and in his temper and tastes was in most respects the opposite of the rough and stern Galerius. He was nobly born, his mother being the niece of the famous Emperor Claudius.

In religious matters Galerius was a fanatical and superstitious Pagan, while Constantius, though attached to the doctrines of the Neo-Pagan School of which we have spoken, was in no way opposed to Christianity; indeed, he was ever kindly disposed to the followers of Jesus, perhaps owing to the influence of his first wife, Helena,* who, according to a

* S. Helena, afterwards famous in Christian history, is generally supposed to have been of very low extraction; she is currently described as originally a servant at an inn. Although the laws of Rome did not give the title of wife to a woman lowly born married to one in the higher grade of society, still such a union being legal was recognised by the State. It was a lawful marriage to all intents and purposes, save that it did not carry with it the title of wife. On his elevation to the rank of Cæsar, one of the conditions accepted by Constantius was that he should marry the daughter of Maximian the Augustus; Helena was then repudiated and divorced. Constantine the Great, however, the son of Constantius Chlorus and Helena, succeeded to the dignity of his father, being preferred to the issue of the second marriage. It would thus seem that the first marriage was deemed a legal union. On the question of the Christianity of Helena, Theodoret, who wrote in the

tradition of authority, was already a Christian during the boyhood of her son, afterwards known as Constantine the Great.

This further partition of the East and West was a fresh blow to the cherished unity of the Empire, and to the matchless dignity of the immemorial city which had given its proud name to the mighty dominion. Four Emperors, each with their army and their court; four capital cities,* the selected residences of the four wearers of the Imperial purple; completed the work of the first division between Diocletian and Maximian, and effectually obscured the oneness of the grand and imposing creation of Augustus and his successors.

No doubt such a division of the great Empire had its advantages; it provided a more ready and effective means of defence against the ever-flowing tide of barbarian invasion, while, to a certain extent, it was a safeguard against the constantly recurring revolutions to which the State was exposed, owing to the facility with which a turbulent and mercenary soldiery could make and unmake a solitary Emperor. But in spite of all the precautions which the statesmanlike foresight of the creator of the new Imperial constitution could devise, to use the words of the historian of the *Decline and Fall*, "the political union of the Roman world was gradually dissolved, and a principle of division was introduced, which in the course of a few years occasioned the perpetual separation of the Eastern and Western Empires."

The effect of these great changes in the government and the Constitution upon the Christian portion of the population was only gradually felt. No doubt the kindly feelings of the newly appointed Western Cæsar, Constantius, towards Christianity in the provinces immediately under his rule, contributed to the quietness generally enjoyed by the worshippers of Jesus; and to a certain extent their influence modified the

early part of the fifth century, tells us that the principles of Christianity were taught by his mother to the boy Constantine (the Great), but Eusebius, who wrote about a century earlier than Theodoret, relates that originally Helena was not a Christian, but was converted much later, under the influence of her son, the Emperor Constantine.

* These four capital cities were in the first instance, Nicomedia and Sirmium, Milan and Trèves.

fitful persecutions to which they were exposed under Maximian. In the East, on the other hand, where the toleration of Diocletian had largely contributed to the development of Christianity, and had emboldened the communities to make a more open profession of their faith in such matters as the building and decorating of their churches, a new and hostile influence had arisen in the person of the Cæsar Galerius, a bigoted and superstitious Pagan. As time advanced the ascendancy of this powerful enemy of Christianity became more pronounced, and Diocletian, whose health gradually failed under the crushing burdens of government, passed more and more under the evil influence of the Pagan Emperor he had created; and a new policy of the bitterest persecution was adopted which, under the name and authority of Diocletian, the Senior and virtual Chief of the Emperors, extended over a large portion of the Empire.

The first famous edict of Diocletian directing a general proscription of Christians was issued early in A.D. 303. But for several years before this date, we are aware that in the army attached to the Cæsar Galerius, the Christian soldiers had been subjected to persecution. At first the respect and awe with which he naturally regarded the Senior Emperor, who had raised him from a private situation to the purple, kept him in check; and the unfortunate issue of his earlier campaign against Persia diminished his influence. But his subsequent triumph over the eastern enemies of the Empire, a series of victories which resulted in the annexation of several important provinces, evidently placed Galerius in a new and more independent position; and he felt himself at liberty to carry out his designs against the hated religion even though they were contrary to the wishes and in direct opposition to the policy of Diocletian. The victorious campaign against Persia was completed in A.D. 297–8, and between this date and the year 302–3 must be placed the various attempts of Galerius to eradicate, or at least to diminish, the growing influence of Christianity in the armies under his command.

The policy pursued seems, from Eusebius' words (*H. E.*, viii. 1 and 4), to have been devised in the hope of more

easily overcoming the scruples of the Christians serving in the armies of the Emperor; the advisers of Galerius reckoned that, if these were compelled or persuaded to renounce their faith, the victory of Paganism over those in civil life who professed Christianity would be comparatively easy. Galerius evidently knew little of the history of the Faith in former years, and strangely miscalculated the constancy of Christians! The Cæsar began by methodically testing the strength of his soldiers' convictions; requiring the different divisions of the army to take part in formal and public idolatrous ceremonies, and giving notice that if any disobeyed the general's orders they would forfeit their rank and the various privileges which many of them as veteran legionaries enjoyed. Eusebius goes on to tell us that numbers of these legionaries, who were soldiers in the kingdom of Christ, without hesitancy preferred the confession of the Name to the apparent glory and comfort which they enjoyed; and of these a few exchanged their honours not only for degradation but even for death. These last, however, who suffered this extreme penalty were not yet many. The great number of believers found in his army probably deterred Galerius and caused him to shrink from a general attack upon all.

Among the more prominent of those few who died for the Faith at this time were the well-known martyr-officers Sergius and Bacchus. A general tradition speaks of these two confessors as originally standing high in the Imperial favour. They attained an extraordinary popularity in early times—many churches erected after the Constantinian Edict of Peace of A.D. 313 were named after them; among which the circular-shaped basilica of SS. Sergius and Bacchus erected at Constantinople by Justinian very early in the sixth century is, perhaps, the most remarkable. Their fame extended far beyond the limits of Galerius' sphere of influence, and we find even in distant Gaul a church dedicated to their memory as far north as Chartres. Two of the "Acts" of martyrs of this period, generally accepted as genuine contemporary pieces, have come down to us, viz., "The Acts of S. Julius" and "The Acts of SS. Marcianus and Nicander."

The simple details of their trial and brave constancy are no doubt accurate pictures of the sufferings undergone for the Faith's sake. Seemingly small concessions to the Pagan worship favoured by the Emperor would have procured for these soldiers life and even high honour, but they preferred the martyr's painful death, rather than deny their Lord. Some strangely pathetic circumstances related in the evidently circumstantial narrative of the "Acts" accompanied the trial scene of Nicander. His wife, Daria, who was present, encouraged her husband in his resistance to the Imperial commands. "O my Lord," the brave woman is reported to have said, "take care how you deny our Lord Jesus Christ. Look up to heaven, you will surely see Him there in whom you must believe. He will help you." And when insulting words were spoken to this true Christian lady, she asked for herself the boon of dying first for Christ.

The persecution, however, between A.D. 297–8 and 302 seems to have been confined strictly to the army. There are records which evidently point to a similar harrying of Christian soldiers at the same period in the dominion of Maximian Herculius, colleague of Diocletian, especially in North Africa and Italy; and towards the end of the period the insistence of Galerius, whose influence over the elder Emperor was gradually increasing, prevailed to a certain extent with Diocletian, who issued similar directions to the officers of his army, insisting upon the duty of sacrificing to the gods of Rome. But in no case does it seem that a death penalty was exacted as yet in his armies.

Diocletian was prematurely old. He was not sixty when his health failed him; years of toil, the cares of government, the restless anxiety of his busy, successful life had worn him out. The gorgeous and elaborate magnificence of the palace which he had caused to be erected at Salona, on the Adriatic, to which he retired after his abdication in the late spring of A.D. 305, seems to tell us that he had long meditated his design of quitting the scenes of his greatness. At all events, in the last months of A.D. 302, when Galerius visited him at Nicomedia, his health had begun to fail, and he was

unable to resist the urgent importunities of his younger colleague, who pressed him to change his tolerant policy. Still reluctant, however, to assume the *rôle* of persecutor of a very numerous sect, which reckoned among its numbers his own wife and daughter, he summoned a Council to consider the wisdom of adopting the anti-Christian policy urged on him. The opinion of this Council, although somewhat divided, seems to have been, on the whole, adverse to Christianity. No doubt the influence of the younger Emperor coloured the spirit of the resolution of the advisers thus called together. Diocletian, in feeble health, a world-weary man, would probably soon disappear from the scene, while his younger colleague, strong and vigorous, would at no distant period no doubt succeed to the supreme authority; naturally his views prevailed. It was determined that the oracle of Apollo at Miletus, a famous Pagan shrine, should be consulted on this all-important question. Lactantius simply tells us that the reply of the oracle was such as an enemy of our divine religion would give. Eusebius in the "Life of Constantine"* adds some curious details.

The oracle's answer was a very singular and ambiguous pronouncement. "The god complained of being unable to announce what was coming on the earth, owing to the presence of just men who were living in the world." The superstitious mind of Diocletian was troubled by this reply, and he enquired who were *these just men*, enemies of the god who prevented his speaking. The opinion was unanimous. They were the Christians. This decided the wavering Emperor. The Cæsar Galerius, the god Apollo, and the Imperial Councillors were evidently of one mind; and the terrible persecution was then arranged. Still Diocletian, remembering the past prosperity of his reign, was loth to proceed to extremities, and, while ordering a persecution, forbade that any Christian lives should be sacrificed; the harrying of the sect was to be confined to deprivation of rank,

* They are found in Eusebius, *De Vitâ Constantini*, lib. ii., under the heading "Constantini edictum ad provinciales de falso cultu multorum deorum." After Chap. XLVIII. the title of the chapter runs thus: "Quod ex Apollinis oraculo, qui ob justos homines responsa amplius edere non poterat, mota sit persecutio."

privileges, and fortune. With this modified persecution the Cæsar Galerius and the Pagan party professed themselves contented for the present. They had laid their plans skilfully, and were confident that events would happen which would speedily induce the ailing Diocletian to adopt a harsher procedure.

The first persecuting edict was published at Nicomedia in the names of Diocletian and Galerius early in the year 303. It was drastic in its stern provisions. (1) All assemblies of Christians were absolutely forbidden; (2) Christian churches were to be destroyed; (3) The Sacred Books of the Christians were to be burned; (4) Rank and privileges were to be taken away from all persons professing the religion of the Crucified: henceforth such noble and privileged citizens of the Empire were liable to torture, and lost their right of appeal to any tribunal; (5) Those who belonged to the lower grades of society, if they persisted in their adherence to the forbidden religion, would lose their liberty; (6) Christian slaves could never receive their freedom.

The provisions of this sweeping edict were in some respects even more far-reaching than the anti-Christian legislation of the Emperor Valerian. The burning of the sacred books was a novel provision. The widely extended regulations as regards slavery affected classes untouched by any previous edict. On the other hand, the clergy were not specially named by Diocletian, and the extreme penalty of death was not mentioned. This last concession was the remnant of the old favour so long shown by the Senior Emperor to the Christian sect.

It may well be conceived that the provisions of this terrible law struck the Christian communities who had for several years been in the enjoyment of immunity from all harassing persecution with dismay and astonishment.

Very shortly after the promulgation of the first edict, a fire broke out in the Imperial palace at Nicomedia where the two Emperors were residing. Fifteen days later another fire in the palace alarmed Diocletian. Eusebius notices it briefly in the following language: "I know not how it happened, but there was a fire that broke out in the Imperial palace at Nicomedia in those days, which by a false suspicion reported abroad was attributed

to our brethren as the authors of it" (Eus., *H. E.*, viii. 6). Lactantius (*De Mortibus Pers.*, 14, 15) goes into further details, and openly charges Galerius with having contrived the fires, and then accusing the Christians as the incendiaries, hoping thus to embitter Diocletian against them.

The result certainly turned out as Galerius wished. Diocletian was thoroughly alarmed; his sick fancy pictured a widespread plot on the part of the harassed Christian communities to destroy him. He no longer trusted his palace officials, many of whom were Christians.

His genuine terror was no doubt increased by the hurried departure from Nicomedia of his younger colleague in the Empire after the second fire in the palace; Galerius professing to dread being burned alive in the Imperial residence "contestans fugere se ne vivus arderet" in Lactantius' words.

Then the great persecution, commonly known as Diocletian's, began in real earnest. In some particulars the last of these terrible onslaughts of Paganism on Christianity bore a striking resemblance to the first. The primary reason for the harrying of Christians under Nero singularly enough was the result of the charge brought against the sect of incendiarism. The current belief that they were the authors of the fires which had partly consumed the Imperial residence at Nicomedia determined Diocletian to crush them. There was no longer any hesitation on his part to proceed to extreme measures; old and long trusted palace officials were tortured and put to death, simply because they professed the feared and hated religion. The ghastly details of some of these martyrdoms are given at length by Eusebius. These men endured their sufferings and met their deaths with the calm courage showed by so many confessors of the noble army of martyrs. The only recorded instances of failure in the moment of bitter trial were the two princesses, Prisca and Valeria, the wife and daughter of the Emperor, who both consented to sacrifice.

Outside the palace walls the same cruel treatment was meted out to the leading personages in the Christian community of Diocletian's capital. The Bishop Anthemius, his presbyters, and a number of his clergy and their households were put to death,

nor were the women and children spared. The early days of the persecution in Nicomedia witnessed scenes unparalleled in any preceding persecution; some victims were taken out to sea and drowned, others burned, and these not in solitary instances, but in whole companies. The prisons were crowded. New and fearful forms of punishment were devised for these hapless and innocent members of the Christian communities. Nicomedia, the beautiful capital of the Eastern Empire of Diocletian, will ever occupy in the sad yet glorious annals of the early story of Christianity a position of prominence. It would, however, be an exaggerated picture of Christian constancy which omitted to record any instances of falling away among the crowd of sufferers for the Faith; but, generally speaking, the Christians of Nicomedia presented a spectacle of extraordinary constancy and even of superhuman endurance. In other cities of the East the first edict and the provisions of the subsequent more severe proclamations which followed, were carried out with more or less rigour, but the instances of defection were often more numerous than at Nicomedia. In Antioch, for instance, we hear of numbers of Christians falling away in the hour of trial.

At no period had the worshippers of Jesus been exposed to so rigorous a persecution as in those early years of the fourth century. No enemy to the Christian sect among the Pagan rulers of Rome had arisen like Galerius. He had made the cause of Paganism his own, and he hoped finally to destroy the dangerous and powerful religion which he so intensely hated. He was an ambitious and self-seeking despot, and probably calculated upon all the influence of Paganism to support him in his intrigues eventually to gain the supreme power in the Empire. Diocletian, his patron, the founder of the new Imperial college of rulers, was sick, he thought, to death, and Galerius was well aware of his project of abdication; it was arranged that Maximian should abdicate at the same time. Galerius' influence with the sick Diocletian would, he rightly guessed, be sufficient to ensure the nomination of two subordinate Emperors, who would be creatures of his own, to fill the vacant places in the Imperial tetrarchy. Only

one obstacle remained to his obtaining the coveted position of supreme lord of the Roman Empire, in the person of the Western Emperor Constantius Chlorus; whose quiet and unostentatious career, however, seemed to suggest that in him would scarcely be found a formidable competitor.

Under such a coming master of the Roman world the future of Christianity seemed indeed gloomy. The fierce edict of A.D. 303 was rapidly followed, under the inspiration of Galerius, by other and yet more terrible anti-Christian laws; laws which were directed against no one special class or order among the communities of the Church, but which in their comprehensive scope affected all, clergy, laity, legionaries, all classes of the Christian society, rich and poor, noble and servile alike. Indeed, had they been generally put into execution throughout the provinces of the Empire, it is hardly conceivable that Christianity could have survived; humanly speaking, it seems as though the religion of Jesus was preserved from annihilation by the new Imperial Constitution arranged years before by Diocletian.

The edicts of persecution drafted, to use a modern term, by Galerius ran in the names of the four lords of the Roman world, Diocletian and Maximian, Galerius and Constantius Chlorus. In the Eastern Empire there was no question respecting the execution of the edicts; here and there a powerful pro-consul or provincial magistrate, sympathising with the persecuted sect, might and did soften the fury of the prosecution; but generally the sufferings of the members of the sect who declined to conform to the State religion were very terrible. In the Eastern countries of Roman Europe, including Greece and the provinces on the Danube, the sphere of Galerius' special influence, the same may be said; in Italy and Africa, the dominion under Maximian, the Imperial edicts of persecution were, of course, enforced with stern rigour, that Emperor being a cruel and superstitious Pagan. But in the West of the Roman Empire there was a very different spirit inspiring the Government. Far away from Diocletian and Galerius, the vast and wealthy province of Gaul, which

roughly included,* it must be remembered, modern France, Switzerland, the Low Countries, the Rhenish provinces of the modern German Empire, and the island of Britain, were all under the rule of Constantius Chlorus.

In this great and important division of the Empire, the edicts emphatically were, if not ignored, at least very imperfectly put in force; nothing like a persecution, in the grave sense of the word, ever raged there. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that this great and good ruler preserved Christianity from the most deadly peril to which it had as yet been exposed.

We have already briefly touched upon Constantius' family and early life. He was by birth a noble, his mother being the niece of the great military Emperor Claudius, and was a trained soldier. Of the contemporary historians, Eusebius tells us that the persecuting edicts were ignored in his provinces; Lactantius slightly modifies this statement, and represents Constantius as making a show of conformity to the laws of the Empire, in that he ordered the destruction of some churches, and even proceeded against certain professors of the proscribed religion; but these proceedings seemed to have been merely a feigned compliance with edicts to which his name was necessarily appended, and the Christians were generally left unmolested in his broad provinces while their brethren were enduring terrible sufferings in Italy, Africa, Spain, and in the East of the Empire.

The question has been asked, What motive induced Constantius to sympathise with the proscribed religion? Eusebius seems to have deemed him a Christian; in his "Life of Constantine" (i. 17), he represents Constantius Chlorus as dedicating to the One God wife and children, his palace, and all that dwelt in it, so effectively that the frequenters of the palace were much the same as those who made up the congregation

* Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, chap. xiii., Note 14, referring to Tillemont, is in doubt whether Spain was among the provinces of Maximian or Constantius. It seems, however, without doubt that the persecution during the years 303–4 and part of 305 was very active in this province. Maximian, therefore, must have been supreme in Spain.

of a church, and as loving to surround himself with Christian priests and bishops. This picture, however, which paints Constantius as a Christian seems scarcely accurate; for Christian writers, who are never weary of describing the conversion of his son, afterwards known as Constantine the Great, say comparatively little of the father; whereas Pagan writers speak of him with an enthusiasm which they would scarcely have felt for a declared enemy of the gods of Rome.

Constantius probably belonged to the school—a fairly numerous body in his days—of enlightened Pagans, who, without breaking with the popular Pagan ideas, had a dim conception of the unity of God; he was probably tolerant of all forms of belief; perhaps he had an especial sympathy with Christianity, and encouraged and even courted its professors. The "pale" Emperor, whose quiet, noble life was spent in successfully fighting with the enemies of his country and in ruling with justice his widespread dominions; whose reign, according to the testimony of both Pagan and Christian writers, was unstained by cruelty or by crime, and who was invariably kind and gentle to all his subjects; stands out a very noble figure among the group of ambitious and persecuting princes who, after Diocletian's division of the Empire, successively filled the various Imperial thrones of the East and West.

The importance of Constantius' policy towards Christianity in her darkest hour can scarcely be overrated. The bitterest and most unrelenting persecution was making havoc of the Church in all the provinces of the East, as well as in Italy and Greece, Africa and Spain. Successive edicts, each surpassing the last in severity, were being put forth by the Imperial Chancery under the direction of Galerius, with the avowed purpose of utterly destroying Christianity in the Roman Empire; but the knowledge that in Gaul, the great province of the West, a totally different policy was being pursued by the powerful and honoured ruler of that portion of the Empire, largely neutralised the deadening and numbing influence of Galerius' work. No doubt those magistrates in the persecuted districts who sympathised with Christianity

were encouraged secretly to favour the proscribed sect, and, as far as was possible, to check persecution; and as time went on, and the power of Galerius began to wane, the policy of Constantius in the West insensibly influenced some at least of that group of Imperial rulers who arose in the troublous times which followed the abdication of Diocletian.

But it was only in the favoured West, in the realm of Constantius, that the edicts were suffered to slumber. In the Asiatic provinces of Diocletian destruction and havoc were very general. In many of the towns the churches which had arisen in the long period of quietness were razed to the ground, and the communities of Christians scattered and cruelly harassed. In the realm of Maximian, ever a bitter foe, the edicts of persecution were rigorously carried out. Rome suffered severely, and much of the "earthing up" of the catacombs which modern exploration has brought to light dates from this sad period; the Bishop of Rome, Marcellinus, thus preventing any desecration of the sacred shrines of the dead. Vast numbers of the Church's archives and copies of the sacred books were seized and destroyed in this period.

In North Africa, which was included in Maximian's territories, the persecution, as might have been expected, was severe. In this province religious life seems to have been all through the earlier centuries peculiarly intense; it was the home, too, of the schismatic whose cardinal error was an exaggerated austerity of life and conduct.

A special feature of this first persecution of Diocletian was the bitterness displayed in the search after the sacred Christian books. Wherever the edicts were rigorously carried out, not only were the churches and the buildings connected with the cemeteries of the dead pitilessly destroyed, but the communities were required to give up the sacred vessels used for the Holy Eucharist, and also the manuscripts which contained the writings of their Teacher and His disciples. There is no doubt that vast numbers of them were destroyed at this time as well as many "Acts of Martyrs," and other church records, an irreparable loss being thus sustained. Many earnest and devout Christians went to prison and some

to death rather than give up these sacred writings; others, however, yielded, not looking upon such a surrender as a vital point. In North Africa a few years later the question was fiercely raised in the Christian communities whether those presbyters who in the hour of extreme peril had thus given up the Holy Books, and who were branded with the opprobrious title of "Traditores," had not by their weakness forfeited their sacerdotal privileges. The charge of yielding up the sacred books was the immediate occasion of the great Donatist schism. The ranks of these schismatics were largely recruited, as might have been expected, in North Africa, from the inheritors of the peculiarly strict and austere tenets of the Novatianists. The schism made so wide a cleavage in the Christian communities that the whole question was subsequently debated at a Council composed of 200 bishops summoned from all parts of the Western Empire to Arles by Constantine in the year 314.

The search after and confiscation of these various Christian writings indicates the nature of the persecution, and shows how elaborately planned were the proceedings of the enemies of the Faith. It was no temporary outbreak of Pagan animosity, but a carefully arranged campaign against the Christian religion, which Galerius and his advisers hoped completely to eradicate.

In Rome, so rich in indirect testimonies to the severity of the last persecution, an absence of written documents containing reliable details is specially noticeable. And this is accounted for by the same reasons we have adduced for the provinces. Indeed, in Rome, the great seat of Paganism, the search for and consequent destruction of the sacred writings and manuscripts of the Christians seems to have been more thorough and complete than in any other of the important centres of population.

The first edict was rapidly followed by a second, which was especially aimed at the clergy. Eusebius (*H. E.*, viii. 6) tells us of the numbers who were at once thrust into prison—bishops, presbyters, and deacons, readers and exorcists. A third edict was soon after put forth offering liberty to

any of these who would consent to sacrifice, but in the event of their refusing they were to be punished with excruciating tortures. The historian seems to imply, in the words immediately following his brief notice of these second and third edicts, that the invitation to recant was generally refused, as he adds: "Who could tell the numbers of those martyrs in every province, and particularly in Mauritania, Thebais, and Egypt, that suffered death for their religion?" Still Eusebius does not conceal the fact that there were some who, appalled at the sufferings which awaited those who were steadfast, did recant in the supreme hour of trial. His words must be quoted: "Hence also we shall not make mention of those who were shaken by the persecution, nor of those that suffered shipwreck in their salvation, and of their own accord were sunk in the depths of the watery gulph." Of the kind of tortures that were endured, he writes: "Here was one that was scourged with rods, there another tormented with the rack, and excruciating scrapings, in which some at the time endured the most terrible death; others, again passed through different torments in the struggle." (*H. E.*, viii. 2–3.)

The closing days of the year 303 brought a brief respite to the sufferings of the persecuted followers of Jesus. It was the twentieth year of the reign of Diocletian, and the Emperor, worn out and ill though he was, determined to celebrate the auspicious date with a grand triumph, accompanied with public games of great magnificence at Rome. Maximian, his senior partner in the Imperial dignity, was associated with him on the great occasion. The long reign on the whole had been a period of real prosperity for the colossal Empire. The frontier provinces of the Danube and the Rhine had been generally protected from the raids of the barbarian tribes, and the military prowess of Maximian and Constantius Chlorus had continued the successful work of the military Emperors Claudius Probus and Aurelian in maintaining the fading prestige of Rome in the West, while the victories of Galerius over the Persian armies secured the Eastern frontiers.

Africa and Britain, as well as the great frontiers of the Rhine and Danube, were each represented in the striking triumph procession, while the signal victories of Galerius in Persia were conspicuously represented in the stately march along the sacred way and through the time-honoured Forum, the scene of so many and such varied Republican and Imperial triumphs.

In one respect the great military display of Diocletian and Maximian in the November of A.D. 303 was especially remarkable. It was the last of the long series of Roman triumphs. Rome had already virtually ceased to be the capital of the Empire. The Imperial visit, however, to the old capital was very short. Diocletian disliked Rome, and his failing health was his excuse for cutting short his part in the festivities of the triumph. He left suddenly for Ravenna; then, his illness becoming grave, he lived in great retirement; slowly journeying in a closed litter back to his loved Nicomedia, which he only reached in the summer of the following year, A.D. 304. Seriously ill, he was confined to his palace in that city for many months; many supposed him to be dead, as in fact he virtually was to all public business.

The ceremonies connected with the triumph of November, A.D. 303, were accompanied by a proclamation of a general amnesty, and, save in certain special cases, all prisoners were released throughout the Empire. Great numbers of more or less undistinguished Christian captives who were awaiting trial found themselves set at liberty in consequence of the general pardon. But the sounds of the public rejoicings soon died away, and the cruel edicts of persecution, being unrepealed, were once more enforced with rigour; in the East where Galerius was now in reality supreme, and in the West throughout the sphere of Maximian's influence; both these Emperors being deadly enemies of Christianity.

Nor were the first three edicts far reaching enough to satisfy the bitter animosity of these princes, for in the spring of the following year, 304, a fourth and more terrible edict was promulgated, no doubt under the special inspiration of Galerius. Eusebius, dwelling especially on the Palestinian

persecution, of which he was an eye-witness, thus briefly sums up the purport of this fresh order of the Imperial Chancery: "In the course of the second year (A.D. 304), when the war was blazing more violently against us, when Urbanus was administering the province, Imperial letters were sent in which it was directed that all persons of every people and city should sacrifice and offer libations to idols." (*De Mart. Pal.*, 3.) Thus open war was proclaimed not merely against the Churches, the holy vessels, the sacred books and writings, and the clergy of all ranks, but against all the believers in Jesus, without distinction of condition, or sex, or age.

In one of those rare Martyrologies which have come down to us, that of S. Savinus—which bears, however, unmistakable traces of a late redaction—we have an evidently genuine* description of the bitter spirit of animosity against Christianity which animated the Pagan population of Rome in the great year of Diocletian's persecution, A.D. 304.

In the spring of this year, in the course of the annual games in honour of Ceres, the Emperor Maximian Herculius was present. Loud shouts applauding the Sovereign were interrupted by cries of the populace clamouring for the destruction of the Christians. The air was full of the persecuting fury of Galerius and Diocletian, which was raging in the East. The Roman Pagans longed to see the bloody scenes of Nicomedia and the oriental centres revived in their own city. "Away with the Christians," shouted the populace, "and we shall be happy." "Let there be no more Christians," was repeated by the angry crowd again and again. Maximian, whose hostility to the sect was well known, was not slow to comply with the popular desire, and soon the persecuting edicts of which we have written above were carried into dread effect at Rome.

Many and various were the devices adopted in the course of the terrible year 304 to compel the Christians to pay even an involuntary homage to the gods of Rome. At Nicomedia, the residence of the Emperor, altars were placed in all the

* De Rossi, *Bullettino di Arch. Crist.*, 1883, p. 156, insists upon the evident genuineness of the preamble to the *Passio S. Savini*. See, too, Allard, *Persécution de Dioclétien*, vol. i. vi. 1.

law courts, and the suitors with various cases were bidden before their cases came on to offer sacrifice. In Galatia, all articles of food, before being allowed to be exposed for sale, were formally consecrated to one or other of the gods. In Rome these strange and hitherto unheard of methods of compelling submission to idolatry were multiplied. Images of the gods were erected in the various markets, and incense had to be sprinkled before these by all who wished to buy and sell. The very public fountains, then as now so abundant in Rome, were guarded, and could only be used by those who chose to adore the national gods.

The condition of the Christian portion of the Roman world, with the exception of Gaul for the reasons above referred to, after the putting out of this fourth edict of persecution, was undoubtedly more serious than it had been at any previous time. The greater part of the year 304 and a considerable portion of 305 may be considered the most terrible period of the long drawn-out persecution which began in the year 303, and did not end till Constantine promulgated at Milan his famous edict in the year 313. It was the most deliberate and carefully planned attack on the Religion of Jesus that the advocates of Paganism ever arranged, and the Emperor Galerius, the chief instigator of the persecution, and his advisers had good hopes that the universal terrorism would, in the end, everywhere stamp out the hated Christianity. The name of Diocletian appeared still as the first of the Imperial names on the fourth edict, but it is doubtful if the state of his health all through that year permitted him to take any active share in the Government. The real author of the persecution undoubtedly was Galerius, while Maximian in Italy and Africa, then, as ever, a determined foe to the sect, willingly carried out the provisions of the various edicts. The passive resistance of Constantius Chlorus, who administered the Gallic Provinces, and who sympathised with Christianity, was, however, the great obstacle to the effectual carrying out of the Pagan propaganda.

The numbers of the Christians in the Roman Empire in the first years of the fourth century, against whom the great

persecution was directed, have been variously stated; we have computed them, it will be remembered, as amounting roughly to between seven and nine millions. But this may possibly be very considerably under the mark, the whole population of the Empire at this period being reckoned at about one hundred millions.

SECTION III.—REVIEW OF THE PERSECUTION.

As the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian in the May of the year 305 marks a new departure in the last great persecution, it will be well to take a general view of this supreme effort of Paganism against Christianity.

It is true that the great persecution lasted roughly ten years. But after the first two years, of which we have spoken in some detail, although it continued to rage, it was greatly limited in the area of its operations. Between the spring of A.D. 303, when the first edict was promulgated at Nicomedia, and the late spring of A.D. 305, when Diocletian and Maximian abdicated, the persecution was general throughout the whole Empire. Even in the great province of Gaul, where Constantius Chlorus ruled, and in which the Christians enjoyed, on the whole, stillness, the persecuting edicts were nominally carried out; while throughout the dominions of Diocletian, Maximian, and Galerius a bitter and harassing war was waged against the followers of the Crucified. These dominions included roughly all the provinces of the East; the sphere of persecution comprehended Italy, Greece, Egypt, Spain, and North Africa in the Western division of the Empire.

After the abdication of the two senior Emperors in A.D. 305, in the West the power of Constantius Chlorus was greatly augmented. Spain was probably added to his sphere of control, and Severus, the new Cæsar, who ruled in Italy and North Africa, contrary to the expectation of his friend and patron Galerius, ordered his policy towards the Christian portion of the population rather after the wishes of Constantius, his immediate superior in the Western Empire, than in accordance with those of Galerius. In his dominions,

although the edicts remained unrepealed and the churches and cemeteries were not restored to the Christians, no open persecution harassed the communities. Thus in the matter of toleration and persecution the Empire was divided. Eusebius clearly indicates this cleavage in the following language. He tells us of "an innumerable multitude of martyrs, noble wrestlers" in the cause of piety who suffered in the Eastern Provinces, while in the other countries, including all Italy, Sicily, and Gaul, Spain, and Mauritania and Africa, the hostility of the persecution hardly lasted two years; they were blessed by the interposition and peace of God. . . . Thus in the one part of the Empire peace was being enjoyed, whilst those brethren who inhabited the other endured innumerable trials (*De Mart. Pal.*, xiii.).

Of this second phase of persecution in the East, which lasted some eight years longer, we shall speak again; of the *general* persecution, usually known as Diocletian's, which went on for about two years, we have already given some details.

Lactantius, in an interesting and instructive passage which deserves to be quoted at length, sets forth the spirit in which the hostile edicts were carried into effect by the different provincial governors and magistrates during these two years of general persecution. "It is impossible to represent in detail everything that took place in all the various districts of the Roman world. Each provincial governor, according to his discretion, used the special powers (against the Christians) with which he was armed. The timid ones, fearful lest they should be reproached with not carrying out their orders, went farthest in the work; others followed them and their severe interpretations of the directions for various reasons; they were cruel by nature, or they were actuated by a special hatred for the 'just ones' (the Christians), or they wished to curry favour with the Sovereign, and by this means to secure their own promotion. In some cases they inflicted the penalty of death in a wholesale fashion." Here the writer quotes the example of a Phrygian city where a terrible massacre of Christians of all ages and sexes was ordered (Eusebius, too, quotes this horrible act, *H. E.*, viii. xi.).

"But the most dreaded of the governors were those who made false professions of kindness. The most dangerous and terrible executioner was he who boasted that he never shed blood in the province over which he ruled. These men could not endure the thought of the martyrs' victory. It is impossible to describe the tortures which these magistrates devised in order to compass their purpose. They felt it was a combat to the death between them and the Christians. I have seen myself in Bithynia, the joy of one of their governors, when a Christian, who had held out for two years with true courage, in the end gave in. He was as proud of the achievement as though he had subjugated a barbarian people. To gain this end, every nerve was strained; they felt their honour was at stake. So they inflicted on the bodies of the victims the most cruel tortures, taking all care that their sufferings stopped short of death. Do they imagine that our bliss is only won by death? Will not these torments win for us the glory due to a noble resistance, a glory, too, which will be more conspicuous in proportion to the greatness of the sufferings endured? But the persecutors are blind. The greatest care is taken of the tortured ones in order that the sufferings may be renewed. The shattered limbs are carefully tended with a view of subjecting the sufferers to fresh agonies. Was ever anything conceived more gentle, more humane? This is the strange humanity which idol-worship breathes into its votaries!" (*Div. Inst.*, v., 11.*)

It is impossible to compute the number of those who perished in the two years of general persecution which, save in Gaul and the provinces under the rule of Constantius, raged over the whole Empire, and in the following seven or eight years of persecution in the Eastern Provinces. The computation of Gibbon is unreliable. He suggests that the total number of those who perished during the whole period of ten years did not exceed two thousand; and he bases his calculations largely upon the ninety-two martyrs of Palestine mentioned particularly by Eusebius; but that historian does not

* Tillemont's rendering (*Mémoires*, v. 20), occasionally slightly paraphrased, has been generally followed.

profess to give more than a list of those cases which were personally known to himself, or were specially interesting. "The roll of the Palestine martyrs is, therefore, on every reasonable supposition only a select list, and bears probably the same relation to the whole number that suffered, as the names of officers in a gazette to the undistinguished victims of the rank and file. The persecution was undoubtedly a mighty effort to crush Christianity. More than once the tyrants boasted that they had succeeded in the attempt.* That in such an endeavour continued for ten years they accomplished nothing more than the death of some two thousand persons is as contrary to reason as to the testimony of all early writers."†

Besides, in his computation, evidently made with a desire to minimise as much as possible the numbers of sufferers in this long continued persecution, the historian of the *Decline and Fall* disdains to take any account whatever of the crowds in different countries who were tortured, as the contemporary writer Lactantius so graphically in the above quoted passage tells us, but were not put to death. He omits mentioning the numberless victims condemned to a lingering death in prison or in the mines, he makes no allusion whatever to the unspeakable misery and wretchedness endured by uncounted numbers of the members of the Christian communities during those long years of the terror.‡

There is no question, when all possible deduction is made for the number—no inconsiderable one—of the "Traditores" who gave up the sacred books hoping thus to save their lives, and of those who fell away under threats of torture, shame.

* Trophies were set up at Clunia in Spain, and elsewhere. One of these runs thus: "Diocletianus Jovius, Maximianus Herculius . . . nomine Christianorum deleto"; and another—"Superstitione Christi ubique deletâ, cultu deorum propagato." Quoted by Dr. Mahan. And see Baronius, *Annal.* A.D. 304.

† Dr. Mahan, Professor of Ecc. Hist. in the General Theological Seminary of New York: *A Church History of the First Seven Centuries*, chap. ix. New York, 1892.

‡ Dean Milman in his notes on the *Decline and Fall*, chap. xvi., specially adverts to the deliberate unfairness of Gibbon, in his summary of the last great persecution, "quietly dismissing from the account all the horrible and excruciating tortures which fell short of death."

and confiscation of their goods, that on the whole the great mass of the Christians endured all rather than deny the name of Jesus, and that their noble constancy and brave patience to the end literally wearied out their persecutors, who gradually became sensible of the hopelessness of the task they had set themselves of exterminating such a sect, so numerous and so determined.

SECTION IV.—AUTHORITIES.

As regards the materials in our possession for any detailed account of the last persecution, our contemporary and most valuable pieces are: (1) The writings of Eusebius the historian, the Bishop of Cæsarea; (2) the writings of Lactantius, afterwards tutor to Constantine's son, Crispus; (3) a certain number of "Acts and Passion of Martyrs"; (4) the testimony of part of the Catacombs.

1. The writings of Eusebius. A very considerable portion of these have come down to us, and in the eighth and ninth books of his "Ecclesiastical History," and in the short monograph on the "Martyrs of Palestine," we have a detailed account of many of the sufferings endured at this time by the Christians; an account compiled by a trained scholar and historian, not merely a contemporary, but an eye-witness of many of the terrible scenes* he depicts.

But Eusebius' narrative only embraces what took place in one portion of the Roman Empire; he confines his story to a relation of the operation of the edicts in the East, dwelling especially on Palestine. On what happened in the Western Provinces of Rome he is almost wholly silent. The reason of this silence has been happily suggested by an eminent modern scholar. "The Bishop of Cæsarea (Eusebius), conscious of the grandeur of this supreme contest between

* We have in the text of our history dwelt very little upon the nature of the sufferings endured. There is, of course, an awful repetition in those harrowing scenes. But in Appendix G we have given a few extracts verbatim from the contemporary historians Lactantius and Eusebius. The latter especially refers to himself as an eye-witness of some of these painful scenes. The extracts in question will give some idea of the sufferings to which the Christians were exposed in the last and greatest of the persecutions.

Christianity and Paganism, a contest in which he was playing a not undistinguished part, would only speak of what he himself had witnessed, or of what he had absolutely heard from eye-witnesses, and he feared to weaken the strength of his testimony by dwelling on what had taken place in distant lands far from the scenes of his own personal observation. Thus his story of the Diocletian' persecution, comparatively limited as it is in its area of observation, differs in its plan from the earlier portions of his ecclesiastical history, which more or less embraces the whole scene of the Christian struggle with Paganism. By forsaking for this memorable period the universal character of its earlier books the historian gives place to the eye-witness."*

A more competent chronicler of those scenes of the great persecution which he describes so graphically and so touchingly can scarcely be conceived. An unwearied scholar and trained writer, Eusebius saw his co-religionists hunted down and tortured; of these many were his own dearest friends and fellow-students. He was present, for instance, in thea mphitheatre of Tyre when his friends and fellow-Christians were exposed to the fury of the wild beasts. He visited and encouraged the confessors in the unhealthy mines of Phænos. He shared the prison life of his dear master Pamphilus at Cæsarea—Pamphilus the eminent scholar and famous expositor of the Scriptures, the defender of the great Origen. He was in Egypt when the persecution was at its height, and when the proscribed Christians endured unspeakable tortures and sufferings.

2. The writings of Lactantius.† Here, too, we have the testimony of a contemporary and of a learned scholar; Eusebius even characterises him as the most erudite man of his time. He had exceptional opportunities of observation and of obtaining accurate information respecting the public events which happened in the early years of the fourth century. He was invited by Diocletian to take up his residence in Nicomedia about A.D. 301, and later he

* Allard: *Persécution de Dioclétien*, Vol. I. Introduction, Section 3.

A short account of Lactantius is given in Appendix E.

entered into the household of Constantine the Great as instructor of his son Crispus. In his treatise on "The Deaths of Persecutors,"* the greater part of which treats of the events of the Diocletian persecution, we possess a vast number of details of the sufferings endured by the Christian subjects of the Empire. Scattered but important notices, too, of these sufferings are found in his "Divinæ Institutiones," from which work we have quoted the remarkable passage given above (pp. 431–2).

3. A certain number of "Acts and Passions of Martyrs" of the period, which have been pronounced genuine in their main features, although in many cases they have been evidently amplified or supplemented by revisers a century or two later than their assumed date, can fairly be referred to. Considering the terrible nature of this last persecution, its operations not being confined to the clergy or to special persons, or to any class and order, but extending to the whole Christian community, it is at first sight somewhat surprising that many more of these "Acts and Passions" relating to so widely extended an onslaught have not come down to us. But the paucity of such "Acts and Passions" is fairly explained when the circumstances of the persecution are taken into consideration. Among the articles of the edicts, it will be remembered, were most stringent provisions for the seizure and destruction of the sacred writings of the Christians, including many MSS. besides the Holy Scriptures; and amongst others no doubt the memoranda which bore upon the heroic constancy and endurance of the Christian victims; such histories and recitals the leading spirits in the State who guided this systematic and carefully-planned onslaught of Paganism would justly view with peculiar abhorrence and dread, as eminently calculated to inspire the sufferers with a noble desire to emulate the bravery and constancy of those who had already in pain and agony won their martyr crowns. These "Acts and Passions," wherever they existed, would doubtless be most carefully sought for and destroyed, while on the other hand the sweeping

* See Appendix E. The question of the authorship of this treatise is there discussed.

nature of the arrests of the clergy as Christian leaders would largely tend to diminish the numbers of such "official memoranda"; the very persons whose duty it was to compile or redact these records having been mostly deprived of their liberty, and either thrown into prison or driven to some distant place of exile. Prudentius, the Spanish poet, who was born only some forty years later, dwells on this in graphic and pathetic words, when he deplores how the stern spirit of the persecutor has silenced* those memories of a glorious past.

The public archives, the *Acta pro-consularia*, and the *Acta municipalia*, from which we might have expected much detailed information respecting the events which accompanied this general Imperial persecution, have for the most part disappeared in the course of the overwhelming disasters which overtook the Empire in the fifth and following centuries.†

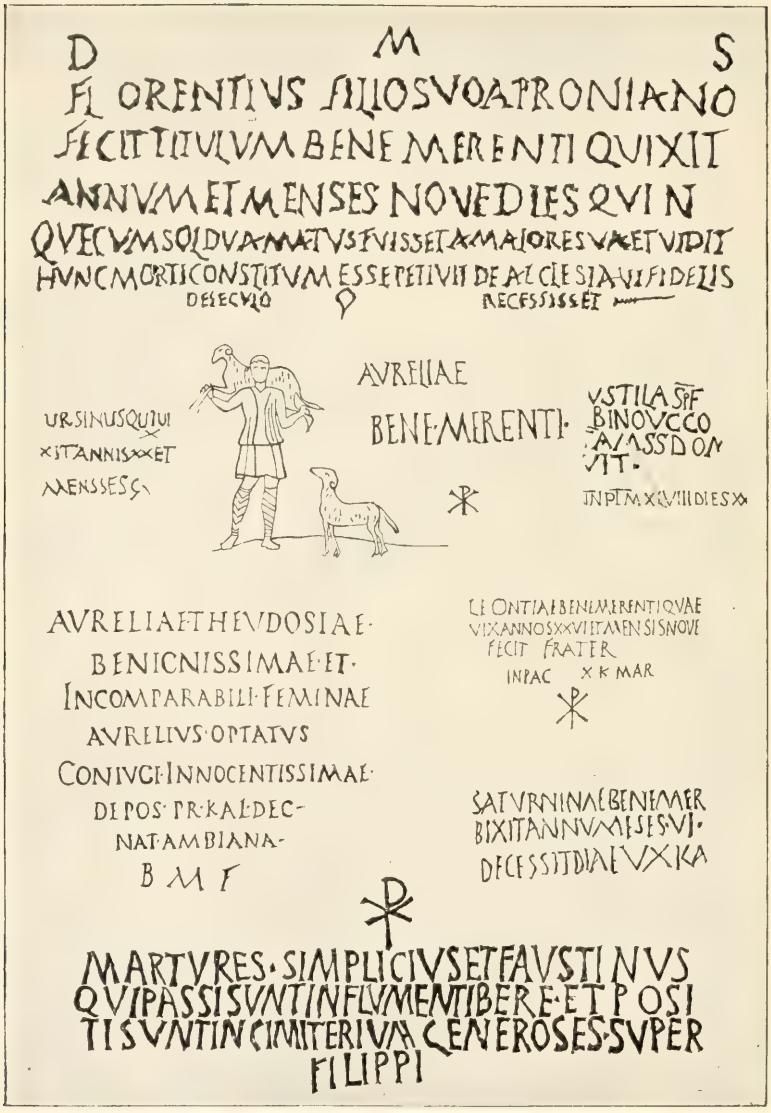
Among the "Acts and Passions" connected with the Diocletian persecution, Allard (*Persécution de Dioclétien*, Tom. I., i., ii., iii.) quotes at considerable length pieces treating of martyr suffering in Macedonia, Pannonia, Cilicia, Thrace, Galatia, and Cappadocia, the ample notices of Eusebius being confined to events which took place in Syria, Phœnicia, Egypt, Pontus, and especially in Palestine.

Comparatively few Roman "Acts of Martyrs" belonging to this time have come down to us. Among these rare "Acts," mostly genuine in the main features of the story, but mutilated and added to by later revisers, we would instance the "Acts" of the famous S. Agnes and of her foster-sister S. Emerentiana, the main features of which narratives late archæological discoveries have largely substantiated.

4. As regards Rome, we possess in the Catacombs the most enduring memory of this last and most terrible of the persecutions. The cemeteries were generally confiscated, and the Christians forbidden to use them or even to enter them. To

* "O vetustatis silentis obsoleta oblivio!
Invidentur ista nobis, fama et ipsa extinguitur."
Prudentius: *Peri-Stephanôn*, i. 73.

† Compare Boissier, who has some good remarks on this point, *La fin du Paganisme*, vol. i. Appendix on "Les Persécutions."



INSCRIPTIONS FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

Reduced facsimile from Perret's "Catacombes," Vol. V., Plate 15.

preserve intact the hallowed graves of their fathers, and especially the resting-places of the more venerated among their dead, the Roman Christian communities blocked or earthed-up many of the galleries where these dead had been tenderly and reverently deposited. After the peace of the Church, one of the Bishops of Rome, Pope Damasus, who presided over the Church of the great city from A.D. 366 to A.D. 384—a name held deservedly in the highest honour among the many illustrious men who filled that high office—devoted himself especially to re-discover many of these tombs, earthed-up in various persecutions. One most important work undertaken by Damasus was the composition of numberless inscriptions in honour of the martyrs whose hidden tombs he uncovered, which inscriptions he caused to be engraved on slabs of marble and stone in peculiarly beautiful and legible characters.* Some of the inscribed tablets refer to martyrs and famous men of an earlier period, to heroes of the older persecutions; but not a few refer to the victims of the last period of which we are now speaking. The historic value is, of course, very great; for he wrote, in the case of the victims of the Diocletian persecution, of sufferers whose story was told him by men who were their contemporaries; indeed, on one tablet we read how, as a boy, he learned the martyrs' history from the lips of the executioner himself! "Percussor retulit mihi Damaso cum puer essem." His are no legendary or apocryphal narrations; they are simply the bare recapitulation of facts of public notoriety. Damasus was born A.D. 305.

Some of these inscriptions are preserved in the ancient Roman churches, whither they were removed in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, when the catacombs were in process of being rifled by foreign invaders. Many of them have been discovered, often broken and mutilated, in the original crypts where Damasus himself placed them, and as

* De Rossi believes that all the beautiful Damasine inscriptions that have been recovered were the work of one artist—Furius Dionysius Filocalus. On one of these inscribed tablets, that belonging to Pope Eusebius, the artist describes himself thus: "FURIUS DIONYSIUS FILOCALUS SCRIPSIT DAMASIS (*sic*) PAPPÆ CULTOR AT QUE AMATOR."

the excavations slowly proceed more are being found. The Spanish poet Prudentius, who was a contemporary of Pope Damasus, specially dwelt on the number and reputation of these tombs of the martyrs, which were among the glories of the Rome of his day, when in one of his famous martyr hymns or poems he wrote that men little guessed how full Rome was of buried saints, how rich was her soil with holy graves.*

* "Vix fama nota est, abditis
Quam plena sanctis Roma sit,
Quam dives urbanum solum
Sacris sepulchris floreat."

Peri-Stephanón, ii. 541–544.

CHAPTER XV.

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

SECTION I.—THE RISE OF CONSTANTINE.

THE story* of the close of the brilliant reign of the great Emperor Diocletian is a pathetic one. All through the closing months of the year 304 he lay sick almost unto death in his palace at Nicomedia. In the spring A.D. 305, he had partly recovered, but when he appeared again in public he was changed almost beyond recognition. His younger colleague, Galerius, came to Nicomedia ostensibly to congratulate him on his recovery; but the real object of his visit was to insist upon Diocletian at once carrying out his long-meditated project of abdication.

With some reluctance the ailing Emperor seems to have consented to retire; a step he had evidently long been meditating, but such resolves are easier to meditate upon than to carry out. When, however, the nomination of the new Cæsars, who were to take the place of the abdicating Emperors, was discussed, Diocletian remonstrated vehemently against the objects of Galerius' choice. These were Daia, his nephew, a young man without culture and half a barbarian, and Severus, whom the Emperor characterised as a drunkard, and utterly

* There seems no valid reason for doubting the general accuracy of the details given in the famous writing *De Mortibus Persecutorum*. The question whether or no Lactantius was the author of "the piece" in question is discussed in Appendix E. But the *authorship* of this contemporary writing does not affect the probability of the general truth of the details. That Maximin Daia and Severus, the two new Cæsars, were imposed upon the weak and suffering Emperor by the imperious Galerius is evident; *Diocletian would never have chosen them of himself*, nor is it by any means certain that he would then have abdicated had not pressure, which he could not resist, been brought to bear upon him.

unworthy of the great dignity. Galerius, however, who evidently looked upon them as his creatures, upon whom he could depend to carry out his will, insisted upon their appointment. Using Diocletian's name, he had already secured the reluctant acquiescence of Maximian. The strange transaction was carried out. The sick and weary Emperor left the scene with apparent willingness; and Galerius and his creatures Daia (henceforth known as Maximin Daia) and Severus, assumed the government of Italy, Africa, and the East, Diocletian retiring to his sumptuous villa at Salona on the Dalmatian coast, and Maximian Herculius to a luxurious home in Lucania. All seemed to promise well for Galerius' project of becoming Master of the Roman world.

Only one obstacle remained. Over the vast Western provinces of Gaul and Britain still presided the quiet, unassuming, and apparently unambitious Constantius Chlorus, the friend of the Christians. Constantius, too, was in failing health, and Galerius looked forward to obtaining at no distant period, without a struggle, the important and far-reaching provinces over which he ruled. It was verily a dark outlook for the Christian cause. But events turned out strangely. The quiet influence of Constantius was far greater in the West than Galerius conceived; and Severus, when he assumed the reins of government in Italy—acting under the directions of Constantius, who, when Maximian, the old Emperor, retired, was really supreme in the West—at once, contrary to the wishes of Galerius, gave up persecuting the Christians in Italy and North Africa. A period of quietness for the long harassed sect commenced throughout the West of the Empire.

At the Court of Galerius in Nicomedia resided a comparatively young and unknown man of high lineage, the eldest son of Constantius Chlorus, afterwards known as Constantine the Great. He seems to have been with Diocletian for some time, treated by him with distinction, and placed in his own army as the best training school. Probably Diocletian looked upon him as the eventual successor of his father, Constantius Chlorus.

He was a young officer of the highest promise, and rapidly obtained promotion. Galerius evidently feared him, and when the appointment of the new Cæsars, Severus and Maximin Daia,

Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome.

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

Statue in the Portico of S. John Lateran, Rome.

was made, was well aware that men's eyes had been directed to the son of Constantius as the natural and proper person on whom the nomination as Cæsar of the West should have fallen. Constantine from this time was carefully watched and guarded. Some months after Galerius' accession to supreme power an urgent message arrived from Constantius Chlorus, who was rapidly failing, requiring the immediate presence of his son in Britain. Curious reports were current of the jealous hatred entertained by Galerius of the brilliant young son of his colleague; of repetitions of the Old Testament story of King Saul's behaviour towards David, of repeated snares laid for the life of the young man; and how he escaped them all, adding continually to his reputation for courage and ability.

Permission was at length reluctantly given him to leave the Court of Nicomedia in order to visit his father in Gaul. This permission was quickly revoked, but Constantine was already out of Galerius' reach. In Britain the dying Emperor commended his son to the legionaries, who, when Constantius Chlorus passed away at York, at once saluted him as Emperor.

When Galerius received the official intelligence of the death of the noble Western Emperor and the accession of the young Constantine to the vacant Throne, his first impulse was to insult the new Emperor of the West; but wiser councils prevailing he reluctantly acknowledged Constantine as Cæsar, reserving, however, the higher rank of Augustus for his own nominee, Severus, who was ruling in Italy. Constantine made no protest here, being content with the absolute sovereignty which he possessed over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, and paying little heed to the exact title recognised by the elder Emperor in far away Nicomedia. He at once published an edict, so favourable to the Christians of his provinces that the very semblance of all persecution at once ceased even in those districts which had been the sphere of influence of the abdicated Maximian, notably in Spain.*

Very different, however, is the story of the fortunes of the

* There is some doubt about the time when this province passed, as apparently it did, under the dominion of Constantius Chlorus; probably this happened when Diocletian and Maximian abdicated and Constantius Chlorus became one of the Senior Emperors, with the title of Augustus.

Church in the Eastern Provinces of the Empire during the years which immediately followed the abdication of Diocletian. In the provinces under the rule of Galerius the harrying of the worshippers of Jesus went on with unabated fury, while in the dominions especially placed under the charge of his nephew, the Cæsar Maximin Daia, the pages of the chronicler relating the fortunes of the Christians are even more stained with blood. Indeed, between the years 306 and 312–13 this peasant-born tyrant, so suddenly raised from a position of obscurity to a throne, stands out in ghastly prominence as the most cruel and determined of the persecutors. The roll of his victims was longer even than the death-roll of the infamous Galerius, to whom belongs the sad credit of being the original inspirer of the last and most awful of the persecutions; and the atrocities perpetrated in his name and with his sanction were more terrible than any recorded in the stories of grievous suffering to which the Christians had been previously subjected.

Maximin Daia, the relentless persecutor, was apparently a man of no culture. He was a superstitious and bigoted Pagan. He would do nothing until he had consulted an oracle; his extraordinary superstition manifested itself in his daily life. Lactantius (*De Mort. Pers.*, 37) tells us how "his custom was daily to sacrifice in his palace, and that it was an invention of his to cause all animals used for food to be slaughtered not by cooks but by priests at the altars, so that nothing was ever served up unless consecrated and sprinkled with wine in accordance with the rites of Paganism."

Before the year 306 had run its course another revolution in Rome gave a finishing blow to the supremacy of Galerius in the West, a supremacy already severely shaken a few months earlier by the elevation of Constantine to the throne of his father in Gaul, Britain, and Spain.

The exciting cause of the Roman revolt seems to have been certain fiscal measures devised by Galerius and Severus by which a long-cherished immunity from taxation was taken from the citizens of Rome. This was another blow aimed at the privileges of the immemorial capital. The Roman

citizens rose, and, driving out Severus, tumultuously proclaimed Maxentius, the son of the abdicated Maximian Herculius, Emperor. Maxentius, desirous to consolidate his usurped authority, summoned from his Lucanian retirement his father Maximian, who was too ready to resume his old sovereignty. Severus made but a feeble resistance, and soon fell into the hands of the usurpers; he was allowed as an act of mercy to put an end to his life and reign by opening his veins. Thus the early months of A.D. 307 witnessed the complete disruption of the tetrarchy arranged by Galerius. *In the West* Constantine, Maximian and Maxentius reigned over Gaul, Spain, Britain, Italy, and North Africa. *In the East* Galerius and Maximin Daia were Sovereigns over Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, Greece, and the Danubian frontier provinces. But there was no longer any semblance of unity between these five lords of the vast Roman Empire. The policy, however, which Severus had pursued in Italy and North Africa, which left the Christians at peace, was maintained by Maxentius.

Maximian, on the resumption of his ancient position, at once sought the alliance and support of Constantine, whose weight and ever-increasing influence in the West was generally felt and acknowledged throughout the Roman world. He visited him in Gaul, bestowed upon him in marriage his daughter, Fausta, and, once more assuming the prerogatives of the senior Emperor, created him "Augustus."

Galerius felt deeply the affront to his dignity as the senior Augustus, and was keenly sensible of the fatal blow to his power occasioned by this new development. He could not quietly acquiesce in the deposition of his nominee Severus and the assumption of the Imperial dignity by the old Emperor Maximian and his son Maxentius; and he determined by force of arms to assert his authority and to reduce Rome once more to allegiance. He consequently, with a powerful army, invaded Italy. But the expedition was disastrous, and ended in an ignominous retreat. Still he refused to acknowledge his defeat. Claiming the right to nominate to

the throne left vacant by the death of Severus, he associated Licinius, an old friend and former brother-in-arms, in the Imperial dignity with the supreme title of Augustus; assigning to him, as his sphere of influence, Illyricum and the Danubian frontier, which still acknowledged his (Galerius') sovereignty. The position of the Roman Empire at the close of the year 307 was as follows. *In the West* Constantine, Maximian, and Maxentius were supreme and were more or less united by common ties of interest, since Constantine had married the daughter of Maximian. *In the East*, and in the Danubian Provinces including Illyricum and Greece, Galerius was still nominally supreme, and was acknowledged as senior Emperor by Licinius and Maximin Daia, the former being his devoted friend, the latter his nephew, who owed him everything. Thus a complete cleavage existed between the West and East. The cleavage was accentuated by the position of the Christian sect, now a numerous and powerful division of the populace. *In the West*, mainly owing to the kindly feeling towards the Church felt and showed by Constantine, whose influence was paramount, the Christians, if not positively favoured, were certainly left unmolested. *In the East*, owing to the bitter hatred of Galerius, shared emphatically by Maximin Daia, the Christians were, all through these years of danger and revolts, cruelly maltreated and ruthlessly persecuted.

An interesting sidelight has been of late years cast on the position of the Church in Rome, *circa* A.D. 307–8, by the discovery of some of the inscriptions of Pope Damasus, originally placed in the Catacombs between A.D. 366 and A.D. 384. These inscriptions, when compared with statements contained in the *Liber Pontificalis*, tell us how sorely the Christian community in Rome was rent by internal dissensions at the time. But what is perhaps more important, we learn incidentally how many Roman Pagans at that time were being enrolled in the Christian communities. No general restitution of the cemeteries and church property had as yet been made, but that they had access to some certainly of the cemeteries is clear, and that the Church in Rome generally was in a position

which made possible a considerable measure of re-organisation is also evident.

The internal troubles to which we refer were owing to the disputes which so often arose after a period of bitter persecution. Some Christians, under the terrible pressure of the Diocletian persecution of A.D. 303–4–5, had submitted to sacrifice; in various ways had conformed to the requirements of Pagan ritual; and when the storm was passed were desirous of being re-admitted to the Church. The question of the treatment of these "Lapsi" in time of persecution had been frequently agitated, notably after the Decian persecution some half a century before, when the authorities of the Church had wisely decided to re-admit penitents after a longer or shorter period of penance, as the offence committed by the "Lapsi" seemed to require. The general principle laid down was that whilst real penitence must be shown by those who had, in the hour of extreme peril, fallen away, the door of mercy and pity was not to be closed upon them. On the other hand, it will be remembered, that in former times a strong party of rigorists existed in the Church, who absolutely refused re-admittance to these poor renegades.

In the Roman troubles of 307–8 the Church authorities were confronted not with the party of rigorists, but with a section of the Church who would at once and without penance receive back again into the community all such "Lapsi." The dissensions assumed grave proportions, and even blood was shed in the regrettable tumults which ensued. The reigning Pope, or Bishop of Rome, was Marcellus, who—after an interregnum of some three or four years, roughly the time of the persecution of Diocletian—had been elected as the successor of the Confessor Marcellinus. Marcellus was banished by Maxentius, son of Maximian, the ruling Emperor, in consequence of these disturbances, and died in exile, probably owing to harsh treatment.

He was succeeded by Eusebius, who, after a short pontificate, likewise died in exile. The remains of both these prelates were brought back to Rome, and were buried with all honour in the Catacombs. Portions of the sarcophagus of

Eusebius have been lately discovered, and inscriptions of Pope Damasus relating to both these prelates have been also found. Pope Eusebius was succeeded by Miltiades, of whom we shall have occasion to speak later.

We return to our brief sketch of the confused and disturbed political history of the period reaching from A.D. 305 to 313, the dates respectively of the abdication of Diocletian and of the promulgation of Constantine's Edict of Milan. The alliance between Maximian and Maxentius, the old Emperor who had abdicated, and his ambitious, profligate son, was only of brief duration. The father claimed the supreme power over Italy and Africa, maintaining that Maxentius owed his throne and position to his own old prestige and military abilities. Maxentius, on the other hand, asserted that he had been legally elected by the Roman Senate and people independently of any paternal assistance. Maximian was driven by his son from Rome, and, failing to obtain any assistance from Galerius, took refuge in Gaul, where he was kindly received by his son-in-law, Constantine, and his daughter, the Empress Fausta; there he again went through the form of a fresh abdication. But the restless old man, taking advantage of the absence of Constantine on a military expedition against a Frankish raid, endeavoured to stir up a revolt against him. The rising was soon put down, and Maximian was condemned to die. He perished by his own hands. This second period of Maximian's active life had lasted a little over three years. He died, unpitied, early in the year 310, generally regarded as an ambitious and self-seeking intriguer.

In the year 310 Galerius sickened of a grave and incurable malady. It seems to have been of the nature of a malignant ulcer, which gradually spread; the loathsome details of the painful sickness are given by Eusebius (*H. E.*, viii. 16), and at yet greater length by Lactantius (*De Mort. Pers.*, 33).

The many physicians who were summoned to the bedside of the suffering Emperor were unable to afford any relief, and we read how some of these were even put to death in consequence of their failure.

The oracles of Apollo and Æsculapius were consulted in vain. Rufinus (*H. E.*, viii. 18) tells us how one of the physicians had the boldness to tell the dying tyrant that his sufferings were beyond the reach of human aid, and that his only hope lay in the God of those Christians whom he had so cruelly persecuted.

This may, or may not, be true; it is, however, certain that Galerius, in his mortal agony, endeavoured to make a tardy amends for the awful suffering for which he was responsible; and in the year 311 a remarkable Edict of Toleration was published in the joint names of Galerius, Licinius, and Constantine.

The text of the edict is preserved in the original Latin form in Lactantius (*De Mort. Pers.*, 34), and in a Greek translation in Eusebius (*H. E.*, viii. 17).

It was a disingenuous document, and on the face of it appeared no trace of the hideous cruelties perpetrated in the course of the long drawn-out persecution. It recounted how many of the Christians, after the publication of the edict, had submitted to the observance of the ancient institutions; but it allowed that great numbers still persisted in their opinions; and, because it had been seen that at present they neither paid reverence and due adoration to the gods, nor yet worshipped their own God, therefore "We, from our wonted clemency in bestowing pardon on all, have judged it right to extend our indulgence to these men, and to permit them again to be Christians, and to establish the places of their religious assemblies." The Imperial document closed with a request for their prayers in the following words: "Wherefore it will be the duty of the Christians, in consequence of this our toleration, to pray to their God for our welfare, and for that of the public, and for their own, that the republic may continue safe in every quarter, and that they may live securely in their dwellings."

The Edict of Toleration was published in the Asiatic and western dominions of Galerius, in the realm of Licinius and even in the Western provinces of Constantine. The name of Maxentius, who was not recognised by Galerius, does not

appear in the preamble; but in Italy and Africa the Church had long enjoyed a doubtful and somewhat precarious toleration; the name of Maximin Daia, Galerius' nephew, the most cruel of the persecuting princes, was not appended to the Imperial edict, but he did not venture to oppose it, and for a time persecution ceased even in his Eastern provinces. Galerius expired very shortly afterwards.

Eusebius (*H. E.*, ix. 1) graphically paints the joy of the Christians in the dominions of Galerius and Maximin, and tells us how the prisons were opened and the mines cleared of captives, how like a flash of light blazing out of thick darkness in every city one could see congregations collected, assemblies crowded, and the accustomed meetings once more held. "The very roads," he tells us, "were thronged by the noble soldiers of religion, journeying to their own homes, singing the praises of God in hymns and psalms, with bright joyous countenances."

The dominions of the dead Galerius were divided by his two nominees, his Asian provinces falling to the lot of Maximin Daia, while those situated in Europe were added to the realm of Licinius.

The rejoicings of the long-harassed Eastern Christians were soon hushed. Maximin Daia was a bigoted Pagan. He hated Christianity with an intense hate, and although he yielded for the moment to the general impulse of toleration which proceeded from the sick bed of the dying Galerius the Emperor of the East never swerved from his long-cherished determination to exterminate the Christians from his widespread dominions. In less than six months after the promulgation of Galerius' Edict of Toleration, his measures were again in full operation, and once more the Christian of the East found himself an outlaw and proscribed. The measures adopted were well and skilfully planned. The Pagan party arranged that petitions and addresses from great cities, such as Antioch, should be presented to the Emperor against the Christians, deprecating the late measures of toleration, and urging all the old pleas; such as the anger of the gods against the hated sect, and the consequent danger

to the well-being of the Empire owing to their wrath. Maximin Daia gladly listened to their "manufactured" requests, professing to see in them the irresistible voice of public opinion. Once more the churches and the cemeteries of the followers of Jesus were peremptorily closed, and all Christian meetings sternly forbidden; efforts were made to arouse a real anti-Christian feeling among the people. Writings, such as the spurious "Acts of Pilate," a composition, dating only from the early years of the fourth century, which in the form circulated by the Imperial emissaries set forth the events of the Passion of the Lord in a blasphemous parody, were scattered broadcast through the cities and villages of Maximin Daia's provinces. They were published openly; they were given to the schoolmasters as subjects of study for their pupils. "The very boys," says Eusebius, "had the names of Jesus and Pilate and the forged 'Acts' in derision in their mouths all day" (*H. E.*, ix. 5–7). The vilest accusations were formally made against the Christians. Nothing, indeed, was left undone to stir up public opinion against the detested sect.

The great historian gives us (*H. E.*, ix. 7) a transcript of an Epistle of the Emperor, a kind of State paper, which was engraved on a brass tablet and publicly set up at Tyre, as a specimen of the Emperor's edicts and pronouncements in favour of Paganism published at this time. The Epistle of the Emperor, in which he decreed the banishment of the worshippers of Jesus from the city, was in reply to one of those anti-Christian petitions addressed to him by the citizens of which we have spoken above. It has been happily termed, a Pagan sermon or "Pastoral," a kind of "*Te Deum*" of Paganism sung on the eve of its final defeat.* After a wordy preamble, dwelling on the happy victory of the human mind over the clouds of delusion, a victory which had led to the universal recognition of the providence of the immortal gods, the Emperor expressed his delight and pleasure at the regard and reverence manifested by the citizens (of Tyre) towards the gods. He noticed that their pious petition

* Allard: *Persécution de Dioclétien*, ii., chap. ix., 11.

to him contained no ordinary request for any local privilege or advantage, but dealt only with the question of the votaries of an execrable vanity (the Christians), long disregarded, rising up, like a funeral pyre which had been smothered, once more in mighty flames (alluding here to the results of the late Edict of Toleration). Maximin Daia then proceeded to congratulate the citizens, who had been evidently inspired by the supreme and mighty Jupiter to make their petition to him to free them from the sect they so wisely detested. Then he dwelt on the gracious kindness of the gods towards them, refraining as these immortals had done from inflicting upon them the awful calamities which had often been the result of Christian folly, and which they might reasonably have expected would have been their fate too. In their case, however, their piety, their sacrifices had propitiated the divinity of the all-powerful and mighty Mars (the Avenger). Those Christians who had abandoned these blind delusions were to enjoy quietness and peace. But those who still clung to their execrable folly were to be driven out and banished far from the city.

Similar letters and edicts were sent by Maximin Daia to all the provinces in his dominion.

At the same time a great effort was made by the determined Pagan Emperor to strengthen the cult of the old gods by the revival of a magnificent and striking ritual, not only in the stately fanes of great cities, such as Antioch and Tyre, but as far as possible even in the more humble rural sanctuaries.

At first Maximin Daia seems to have refrained from open bloodshed in the case of the harassed Christians, contenting himself with banishing, mutilating, and otherwise maltreating the worshippers of Jesus; but soon severer measures were adopted, and persecution was decreed equalling in its cruel severity that which had prevailed before the Edict of Toleration had been put out from the death chamber of Galerius. Once more the provinces of the East, where Maximin Daia was paramount, were the scenes of a terrible Christian persecution.

But the end of all this was nigh at hand.

We turn again to the Western Empire, where grave political events were occurring which completely changed the whole aspect of affairs throughout the Roman world.

The peace of the provinces of the Western Empire seemed secured by the close connection through marriage ties of the three Sovereigns who reigned respectively over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, Italy and North Africa, Illyricum and the Danubian provinces. Constantine, the most powerful of the three Lords of the West, as we have seen, was married to Fausta, the daughter of Maximian, while a marriage was arranged between Licinius, the Sovereign of Eastern Europe, and Constantia, the half-sister of Constantine.

In the vast territories ruled by these three Emperors the quiet long enjoyed by the Christians was completely ratified by the Edict of Toleration, lately put out by the dying Galerius. In Rome Maxentius, for reasons unknown to us, but not improbably connected with the idea of attaching the powerful sect more closely to his Government, promulgated an edict which restored the long-confiscated possessions of the Church, including the subterranean cemeteries especially dear to the community of Rome from the hallowed traditions of a glorious past.

Miltiades, the pope or bishop of the ancient metropolis, who had succeeded Eusebius, who died in his banishment, was formally recognised by the Imperial Government as the head of the Christian community of Rome. His first act was, as we noticed above, to inter the remains of his predecessor Eusebius with reverent care in one of the sacred chambers which once more had become the property of the Church.

The peace of the Roman world, however, was broken by the ambitious views of the evil Maxentius.* Jealous of the prestige

* The Sovereigns of Italy and the East, Maxentius and Maximin Daia, have won a certain prominence among the wicked Emperors of Rome. Their shameless immoralities were even more notorious than those indulged in by their worst predecessors on the throne. The conduct of Maxentius especially had alienated all the best and most serious of his Roman subjects. He was universally regarded with detestation and loathing.

and power of Constantine, the pretext he alleged for the declaration of war against his brother-in-law was the treatment of the old Maximian, who had been condemned to die, after the failure of his infamous conspiracy. Maxentius had previously quarrelled with his father and driven him from his dominions, but he chose to regard Constantine's conduct towards the restless old conspirator as a deadly offence.

Maxentius, conscious of possessing an army considerably larger than his adversary's, and confident of success, proceeded to insult the great Western Emperor by publicly throwing down the statues erected in his honour in Italy and Africa. In view of the coming war, Constantine, who had determined, even with his smaller force,* to invade Italy, had secured the neutrality of Licinius, to whom he had betrothed his sister Constantia. But it was a perilous and dangerous adventure, and only the consummate generalship of Constantine and the wonderful celerity of his movements prevented the disaster to his arms to which Maxentius confidently looked forward.†

Without delay the Gallic Emperor, leading his troops over the rugged and inhospitable passes of the Mont Cenis Alps, won a series of brilliant victories over the armies of his adversary successively at Susa, Turin, and Verona, and reached the neighbourhood of Rome, with a small army of picked veterans, flushed with victory, and inspired with confidence in their brave and skilful commander.

In the neighbourhood of the immemorial capital of the Roman world the last stand was made by the still numerous armies of Maxentius; the same good fortune which had accompanied the daring army of invaders all through the successful campaign again befriended them. The disposition of the forces of Maxentius was incompetent, and every error in strategy was turned to account by the consummate generalship of the Western Emperor. The result was a triumphant victory;

* The disposable legionaries of Constantine were computed at about 40,000 men, but they were trained and war-worn soldiers; 40,000 men of his troops were engaged in defending the Rhine frontier. Maxentius on the other hand, it is said by Zosimus, had well-nigh 190,000 legionaries under arms in Italy.

† The question of Divine assistance being given to the Emperor Constantine in this campaign against Maxentius will be presently discussed at some length.

the Milvian Bridge over the Tiber, the scene of the final rout of the Italian Emperor's forces, gave its name to one of the decisive battles of the world. In the headlong flight which ensued Maxentius perished in the waters of the Tiber, and the victorious Constantine immediately took possession of Rome, where he was received with enthusiasm as a deliverer. Indeed, there is little doubt but that the shameful excesses of Maxentius had largely affected the loyalty of his subjects, and had contributed in no small degree to the wonderful and rapid success of the Emperor Constantine, in his victorious march from the passes of the Mont Cenis to the gates of Rome.

The crowning victory of the Milvian Bridge and the entry of Constantine into Rome took place in the October of the year 312.

SECTION II.—THE CONVERSION OF CONSTANTINE.

Among the rulers of the Roman world between A.D. 305 and A.D. 312, the years which immediately followed the abdication of Diocletian, one figure occupies a peculiar place. Maximian, Galerius, Maximin Daia, Severus, Maxentius, were all stained more or less with crimes, with offences of the gravest complexion against morality, with greed, selfishness, heartless ambition, remorseless cruelty; nor were they in any way specially distinguished as wise or capable Sovereigns. Only the son of Constantius Chlorus, Constantine—in after days generally known as "the Great"—has been characterised alike by Pagan as by Christian writers as a wise and good ruler of men; not only a brave and skilful general, but also a capable and far-seeing prince in times of quietness and peace.

Constantine was scarcely twenty years of age when in 392 his father, Constantius Chlorus, was promoted to the high dignity of Cæsar, and was invested with the government of Greater Gaul, including distant Britain. This great promotion of Constantine's father was, however, coupled with the understanding that the new Cæsar should put away or divorce Helena, the mother of his son, and espouse the daughter of the Augustus Maximian. We presently hear of the apparently disinherited Constantine as attached to the service of

Diocletian, in whose armies he quickly rose to the conspicuous station of a tribune. When Diocletian resigned the purple, it was the general expectation that the brilliant young soldier, who was then a little more than thirty years of age, would be appointed Cæsar; but, as we have seen, Galerius, who was all-powerful in the State, had other views, and Constantine was left for the present in a private station. Shortly after, the dying Constantius Chlorus recalled to his side the long-absent son of Helena, and procured his nomination by the army of Britain and Gaul to sovereign rank, leaving in his charge his children by his second marriage. In spite of the ill-will of Galerius, Constantine succeeded to the great dominions ruled over by his father, to which Spain had probably been recently added. He thus became Sovereign Ruler over the Western provinces of the Empire in A.D. 306. For the next five or six years his government was characterised by moderation and firmness. The frontiers were protected from the raids of the barbarians, and his dominion generally enjoyed quiet and prosperity. Although all through this period of his life he carefully carried out the Pagan observances required by the Constitution of the Empire, officiating at the dedication of Pagan temples and publicly taking part in the sacrificial ceremonies, yet his Christian subjects generally enjoyed quietness, if not something of official recognition. His great reputation as a wise Sovereign and a skilful military commander was well known throughout the Roman world, and gave him vast and widespread influence.

We have already alluded to the circumstances which led to the war between Constantine and his brother-in-law, Maxentius, the Sovereign of Italy and Africa. During this period, the early autumn of A.D. 312, took place the event which had so far-reaching an influence on the story of the world—his conversion to Christianity.

The Pagan writer Zosimus* has a strange story referring

* Zosimus was a Government official, apparently of some rank, at Constantinople in the first half of the fifth century. His history, written in Greek in six books, treats in Book I. very briefly the lives of the Emperors Augustus to Diocletian; Books II.–IV. in much greater detail contain the history of the

the date to A.D. 326, and attributing it to remorse for the death of his wife and of his eldest son, Crispus. The Pagan pontiffs, on being asked what expiation he would make for that judicial murder, replied that they were aware of none which would atone for such evil deeds. Hence, on being informed that there was no sin, however grave, which could not be washed away by the Christian sacraments, the Emperor joyfully embraced a religion in which he could, on easy terms, obtain peace. But this is all imaginary; for we have abundant proof that the Imperial conversion belongs to a much earlier period than A.D. 326. The famous Edict of Milan was promulgated in A.D. 313, and a number of historical incidents between A.D. 312–13 and A.D. 325 indisputably show that all through this period the Emperor was an earnest Christian.

Lactantius (*De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 44) mentions as taking place in A.D. 311* the dream of Constantine, directing him to mark the shields of his legionaries with the sacred sign of the cross before the decisive battle of the Milvian Bridge, in which Maxentius was defeated and slain. Eusebius (*H. E.*, ix. 9), writing *before* the death of Crispus, relates how Constantine invoked the aid of the God of Heaven and of His Son Jesus Christ, and then by the Divine assistance defeated the tyrant (Maxentius); and the same writer later, in his "Life of Constantine," i. 28–29, gives us careful details of the event in question; details which he says he heard from the Emperor himself. The story is a remarkable one. The scene of the wonderful appearance and of the dream was somewhere on the march from Gaul to Italy, apparently before† Italy was entered, and probably in the wild and inhospitable defiles of the Mont Cenis pass. Constantine

period from the accession of Constantius and Galerius to the death of Theodosius. The Fifth and Sixth treat of the years between A.D. 395 and A.D. 410. The work is unfinished.

* Lactantius, apparently through an error, antedates the event by one year.

† Both Boissier, *La fin de Paganisme* (1898) (vol. i., chaps. ii., iii.), and Allard *Persécution de Dioclétien*, vol. i., x. 1 (1898), who discuss the question of the *conversion* at considerable length, place the scene early in the campaign of Constantine, *before* the Emperor had entered the Italian plains.

was on horseback, and was meditating upon the difficulties and dangers of his daring adventure. He thought of the small number of his legionaries, and recalled with a superstitious fear what he had heard of his adversary Maxentius' great devotion to the Pagan gods. It must be remembered that as yet Constantine was a professed Pagan. Alone could he hope to be victorious if some divinity was on his side. Then it came into his mind how many of the rulers of Rome, who had trusted in the gods of Rome, had perished, and their children, and their very memory too, had passed away. Only one could he remember who had prospered—his own father Constantius, who was a Monotheist. Who was this One God who had helped Constantius Chlorus? So he prayed earnestly in his sore need that the God who had helped his father would manifest Himself to him and give him protection. Then as he prayed came the wonderful sign—the luminous cross in heaven with the writing, "Conquer with this."* The heavenly vision was seen, so runs the story given in Eusebius, not only by Constantine but by his soldiers. That night the Emperor had a remarkable dream,† in which Christ appeared to him and bade him make at once an ensign under which his legions would be victorious in the ensuing campaign. Around the story of the conversion of Constantine, as related by Eusebius and generally followed by ecclesiastical writers, has arisen a war of diverse opinions; one school of writers deriding it as belonging to the improbable if not to the impossible; the other school accepting it as a piece of true history. The consequences

* Eusebius tells the story in Greek; the words which accompanied the cross were: "τούτῳ νίκα"; but Constantine and his legionaries spoke Latin, so the words in Constantine's own narrative to Eusebius were no doubt, "Hoc vince," or "Hoc vinces."

† It has been suggested that the "dream" referred to by Lactantius (*De Mort. Pers.*, 44) was an appearance of Christ subsequent to the one related in the "Life of Constantine," which followed immediately after the luminous appearance of the cross in the heavens. "The Command" given in Lactantius' vision directs the cross symbol to be marked upon the shields. The first vision simply gave direction as to the standard or ensign. Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, i. 486–488, mentions the cross upon the ensign and also on the shields of the legionaries.

THE VISION OF CONSTANTINE.

After Raphael's painting in the Vatican, Rome.

of the conversion of the great Western Emperor have been so momentous and far-reaching that it will be worth our while quietly and dispassionately to see how the matter stands.

It is perfectly clear that before the campaign which resulted in the defeat and death of Maxentius, and the consequent annexation of his broad dominions of Italy and North Africa to the realm of the Gallic Emperor, Constantine was to all intents and purposes a Pagan ruler; one who, it is true, viewed the Christian sect benevolently, possibly even favourably, but emphatically *not* a Christian and apparently with no idea of becoming one.

It is equally clear that during the campaign in question he changed his mind on the question of Christianity, and fought the several battles with Maxentius and his lieutenants avowedly under the protection of Him on whom the Christian called, with a sacred banner floating above his legions inscribed with the holy symbol and awful monogram of Jesus Christ. Equally certain is it that after the crowning victory of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine made a public profession of his Christianity, asserting it not only in a formal State edict but showing it by his personal interest in the inner life and government of the Christian Church. He was evidently intensely in earnest.

Something, then, must have happened early in the campaign against Maxentius, which brought about so great a change in the opinions and subsequent conduct of the Emperor Constantine. This "something" Lactantius (*De Mortibus Pers.*, 44) tells us was *a dream* in which he received a command to stamp upon the shields of his legionaries the sign of the cross. Eusebius, in his "History" (ix. 9), is still vaguer, simply stating that he prayed to God and to His Son and Word, Jesus Christ, and was divinely assisted in the battle. Only in Eusebius' later work, in his "Life of Constantine," appears the story of the sign of the cross in Heaven, told at some length as it had been related to him by the Emperor himself: the sign being the response vouchsafed as an answer to earnest, anxious prayer, and followed by the dream which we have related above.

The *bona fides* of Eusebius here is evident. He makes no effort to represent his hero in a specially favourable light. He describes him as anxious about the success of his perilous adventure, and casting about for an Immortal who should help his arms and crown his expedition with victory. In this perplexity he bethinks him of the unknown God who had blessed his father, and to him he turns with earnest prayer—answered, as he thought, by a miraculous sign,* followed by a dream. Victory followed, and, thus convinced, he became a devout follower of the Immortal Being who had blessed him in his hour of danger and of urgent need. The very earthiness of the whole transaction is a witness of its veracity. Had Eusebius *invented* it, he had surely made it more beautiful and his hero less earthly and more spiritual.†

The wonderful success of Constantine, with his comparatively small force, when the numerous legions of which Maxentius was able to dispose are taken into account, appeared to Pagans as well as to Christians as miraculous. The legions of Maxentius seemed unaccountably to melt before his rapid advance. Everything at first seemed to promise a successful resistance. The armies of Italy far exceeded in numbers the invading force; they were admirably equipped. There were several strong fortresses in the invaders' track, and, above all, the Imperial City, with its great garrison

* A sign which, as years passed on and he brooded over it, became ever more clear and distinct till it assumed the definite appearance related in his narrative to Eusebius. The dream is easy to explain; his mind was full of what he had seen, or *thought* he had seen, of what he heard from Christian lips about the cross and its power.

† The above suggestion contained in the text, and in the note, of course by no means precludes the *possibility* of a miraculous sign having been seen and a subsequent revelation in the night vision having been made to Constantine. The fact of the conversion of Constantine was a very important one, and tremendous consequences to the votaries of Christianity followed. But the silence of Lactantius, and of Eusebius in his earlier writing, seems to suggest that the suggestion above given is the more probable explanation of the incident. The sketch of the character of Constantine, which follows in the text of our history, too, supports the view above advocated. That Constantine firmly believed in the heavenly vision and in the command of the dream respecting the cross symbol is certain. The victory which followed, and the splendid success of his dangerous campaign, in his eyes set the seal of truth upon it.

and its immemorial prestige, was Maxentius' stronghold. Pagan, as well as Christian, saw in the unexpected and rapid victory of Constantine the hand of some supernatural power. This opinion seems to have gathered strength as time went on. One of the panegyrists even wrote as follows: "All Gaul speaks of the heavenly armies which were seen in the skies in the last decisive battle, with their glittering armour and flashing weapons, led by the divine Constantius Chlorus helping his son in the supreme conflict."

It may well be conceived that Constantine himself believed that he was the chosen minister of God, and that out of gratitude for the divine help he devoted himself to the service of the Deity who had taken him under His almighty protection.

The Emperor Constantine, who put an end to the long-drawn out war between Christianity and Paganism, who gave the blessings of peace to the Church and laid the foundation stories of its supremacy in the world of Rome, was no ordinary man. Trained in the hard school of adversity and disappointment, he became, during his period of exile from his father's Court, a great and daring soldier and a skilled tactician, eventually taking rank with the most famous military Emperors as a consummate general; as a ruler, too, in times of peace, he occupies a distinguished position His government of Gaul, after his accession to power, on his father Constantius Chlorus' death, was wise and temperate, and his praise was in all the countries of the Roman world. None of the vices which stained the lives of so many of the mighty Emperors have ever been attributed to him. Some critics have endeavoured to paint him as a shrewd opportunist and to represent his Christianity, which clearly dates from the epoch upon which we have been dwelling, A.D. 312, as simply a matter of selfish State policy. Others sketch him as a saint of God. Both these estimates are probably erroneous. His devotion to Christianity was no mere selfish adoption of a cult that would secure his interests and further his ambitious schemes. According to his lights he was from the first a devout and earnest believer. His whole subsequent

career, his acts, his sayings, his whole policy, plainly show us this. But, on the other hand, the first great Christian Emperor was no ideal saint of God; no holy and humble man of heart. He was, in the first instance, as we have seen, drawn to Christianity not by any of the deeper feelings of the heart towards the great Sacrifice, not by the exceeding beauty of its moral teaching, not by any profound sympathy with a sect which had endured persecution and unheard-of trials for the faith with a splendid constancy and an almost superhuman endurance; a sympathy which in that age moved so many to enthusiasm for Christians and Christianity; but simply by a persuasion that the God adored by Christians was more powerful, more able and ready to help his worshippers than any of the old deities worshipped in the temples of the Empire. It was a sorry motive for the great conversion which had such momentous consequences; there is little trace in it of any of those nobler and more generous aspirations which run like a golden thread through the life story of great Christian heroes. But, such as it was, it was intensely real, absolutely genuine, and from the hour of his fervent prayer in the wild, savage defiles of the Alps, when he received what at least he took for an answer to his prayer, Constantine was a fervent believer in the doctrines of the religion of Jesus, a devoted and all-powerful friend to the long persecuted and harassed sect.*

The end was come at last. There is not much more to be told in our account of the laying of the foundation stories of our faith. The long war between Christian and Pagan which for more than two centuries and a half had been waged so fiercely by the Pagan, so quietly but with such surpassing

* Boissier, *La fin de Paganisme*, vol. i., chap. i.–v., well illustrates this estimate of Constantine's Christianity, very real, even if based on somewhat sordid and earthly motives. Quoting Eusebius, *Vita Const.*, iv. 9, he says: "Vers la fin de sa vie, ecrivant au roi de Perse, Sapor, pour lui recommander les Chrétiens répandus dans ses Etats, il recommence à depeindre les malheurs qui ont accablé les ennemis de l'Eglise, tandis que lui (Constantine), qui a ouvert les yeux á la verité, a toujours été heureux, et qu'il a fait le bonheur de tous ses sujets. Cet argument sur lequel il revient sans cesse, lui paraît irrefutable, irresistible, et l'on voit bien qu'il lui semble qu'il n'est pas besoin d'en invoquer d'autre pour que le monde entier suive son exemple et se fasse Chrétien comme lui."

bravery by the Christian, was virtually over when Constantine, the Christian Emperor, at the head of his conquering legions, rode through the streets of Rome, past the immemorial Forum, still glittering with its hushed and almost deserted temples, to the proud palace of the mighty Cæsars which looked over that matchless group of silent historic shrines. Christian in good earnest was the great Gallic Emperor, though the charm which had drawn him to the strange cross emblem floating over his war-worn legionaries, and graven on their glistening armour, was one which the divine Founder of Christianity no doubt watched with a tender, regretful sorrow. Yet, earth-stained though the motives had been which had made him a follower of Jesus, he *was* a follower in intense earnest; and the late splendid victory of the Milvian Bridge, which had given him the mighty dominions of Italy and Africa, ruled over by the dead Maxentius, had set as it were the seal on his fervid belief; "*In hoc signo*" (Crucis) had he not triumphed!

Very gently did the conqueror use his victory; little blood was shed, the only victims seem to have been the son of the fallen Maxentius, and just a few of the chief instruments of the tyranny and evil rule of the late Emperor. Rome rejoiced at the wise and beneficent measures of Constantine, which at once relieved the victims and sufferers of the late shameful tyranny; not only were the poor and oppressed Christians the object of the *largesse* of the grateful Emperor, but the many Pagans who had been banished, impoverished, and imprisoned under the late wicked and profligate Government had cause to bless the day which witnessed his triumph. There was no ostentatious favour shown to the long-despised and often sorely-harassed Church of Christ, but the exclusive patricians and haughty senators were amazed at meeting at the table of the mighty Emperor poorly dressed, unknown men who were freely admitted to the august circle of the Palatine—ministers of the Gospel distinguished, probably, for their piety and learning.

For the first time in the history of the Empire a subsidy was granted from the Imperial treasury towards the building

of churches, and the historic palace of the Laterani, which had been the Roman residence of the Empress Fausta, was given by Constantine to Miltiades, the bishop of the Christian community in Rome, as his residence; the permanent home for the administration of the see, and the site of the first Christian cathedral* of the ancient metropolis of the Roman world.

Among the statues and temples which an admiring and grateful people proceeded to erect to the great Emperor, who, although an earnest Christian, still maintained with the title of Pontifex Maximus the old Imperial prerogative which constituted him the supreme head of the Pagan religion professed by the great majority of the inhabitants of the Empire, was that superb arch of triumph under which passed the old Via Triumphalis leading to the Via Appia. On that magnificent arch the inscription can still be read, though somewhat mutilated; bearing the memorable words which tell of the universal belief of the Pagan world in the supernatural assistance vouchsafed to Constantine in the late war with Maxentius. The inscription runs thus: "The Senate and the Roman people have dedicated this Arch of Triumph to the Emperor Cæsar Flavius Constantine because, thanks to the divine inspiration (*Instinctu divinitatis*†) and to the greatness of his genius, he with his army has, in a just war, avenged the Republic."

* This was the origin of the famous Lateran church and papal palace. The Laterani were a wealthy patrician family whose houses and estates were originally confiscated by Nero. The old family palace of the Laterani became an Imperial residence, and it was given by the Emperor Maximian to his daughter Fausta, who became, as we have seen, the wife of Constantine. The first basilica was built under Pope Silvester and consecrated A.D. 324. It was rebuilt after an earthquake by Pope Sergius II. in A.D. 904–11, and then dedicated to S. John the Baptist. Sergius II.'s basilica was destroyed by fire in A.D. 1308. It was again burnt in A.D. 1360, was rebuilt by Urban V. A.D. 1362–70, and has since been sadly mutilated by subsequent additions and alterations. Along the west front still runs the proud inscription: "Sacrosancta Lateranensis ecclesia, Omnium urbis et orbis ecclesiarum Mater et Caput." The Chapter of the Lateran still takes precedence even over that of S. Peter's.

† These words with their skilfully-veiled compromise between Christianity and Paganism, long suspected as a later insertion, have by modern archæological investigation been shown to form part of the original inscription put up by order of the Senate.

Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome.

FAÇADE OF S. JOHN LATERAN, 1734.

On the right is the Lateran Museum, occupying part of the site of the ancient Lateran Palace.

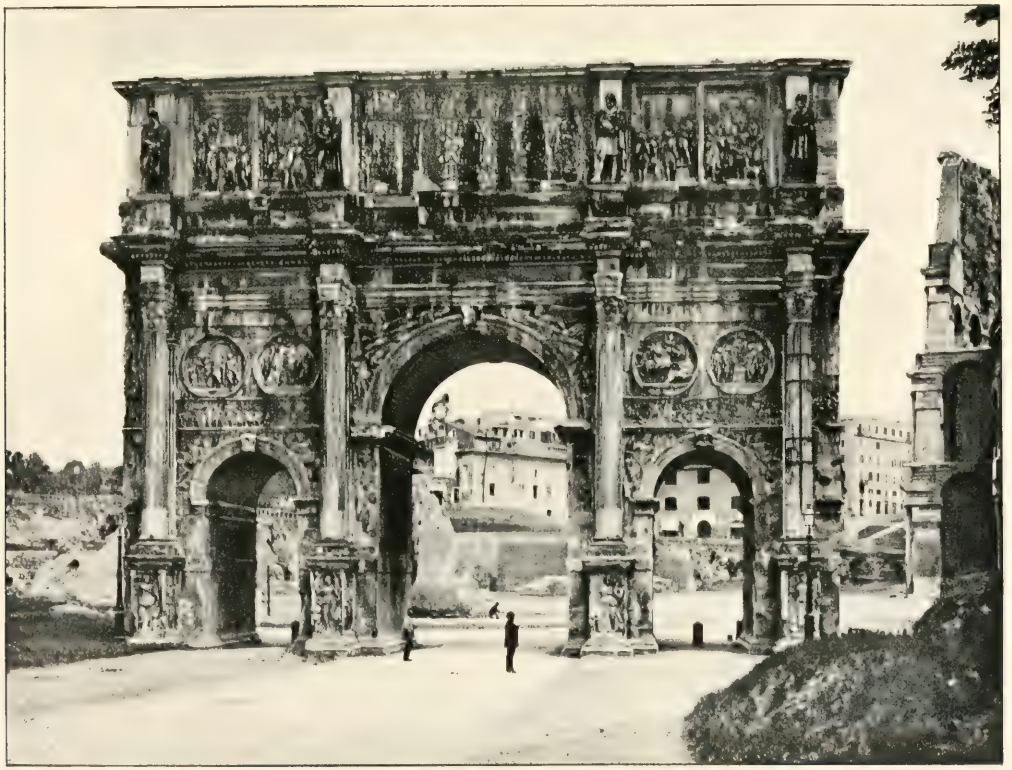


Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome.

THE ARCH OF CONSTANTINE (FORUM).

The completeness of the victory of Constantine and the consequent incorporation of the territories of Maxentius (Italy and North Africa) with the vast Western Empire of the conqueror, gave Constantine such an overwhelming preponderance in the Roman world, that the persecutor, Maximin Daia, on receipt of a peremptory letter from the Court of Constantine, deemed it expedient to stay the persecution which for so many weary years had harassed the Eastern Provinces. We have in Eusebius a copy of the decree which Maximin Daia issued. It was an untruthful and hypocritical document, but it directed that if any should wish to follow their own worship (alluding to his Christian subjects) these should be suffered to do so. This concession was, however, only granted through fear of Constantine. The real sentiments of Maximin Daia were manifested shortly, as we shall presently notice.

Early in A.D. 313 Constantine came to Milan, where he had arranged to meet the Emperor Licinius, whose dominions extended over the Eastern Provinces of Europe. The marriage of his sister, Constantia, with Licinius, which had been previously arranged, was to be celebrated there with much ceremony. During the late war Licinius had maintained a position of friendly neutrality towards Constantine, and the relations between the two Emperors now became closer.

The famous Edict of Milan, which was put out in the earlier months of this memorable year, ran in the names of the two allied Emperors. The edict was more than a simple Imperial proclamation according a general amnesty to the persecuted Christians; it was more than a mere edict of toleration; it was intended to be, and indeed was generally received as a manifesto of the Imperial clemency in favour of the long proscribed religion, which had been accepted as the true cult by the all-powerful Emperor Constantine. It certainly left to all the citizens of the Empire the free choice to follow that mode of worship which they might wish, but that was no new permission. The only form of worship forbidden during the two hundred and eighty years which preceded the putting out of the Edict of Milan was the Christian, and that was now especially, and with much detail and emphasis pronounced to be lawful.

But more than this was contained in the Milan Edict. The second part of the Imperial Law provided for the restoration to the Christians of all the property confiscated in the days of persecution. Everything was to be given back; even lands and goods which had since changed hands by purchase, were to be restored summarily to the original Christian possessor, the State reserving to itself the power, if it thought fit, of indemnifying those persons who had thus to make restitution. In addition, all the public places where Christians used to meet for worship and assembly (cemeteries were here specially alluded to), which had been taken from them by the Government, were at once to be freely restored and that without delay; thus tacitly, but emphatically, condemning the whole public procedure followed in the days of the late persecution.

Nothing could be more complete, more far-reaching, more favourable to the Christians than the provisions of the edict. And it must be borne in mind that this Imperial Law ran throughout the whole of the Empire in Europe and Africa, stretching from the Atlantic seaboard of Western Gaul to the coasts of the Euxine and the Danube frontier, and from Northern Britain to the Mediterranean-washed provinces of Spain, South Gaul and Italy, and southwards over North Africa. Of this enormous realm by far the greater part acknowledged the rule of Constantine.

The wording of certain portions of the edict is curious, and deserves a little examination. It is undoubtedly a Christian document, inspired by a Christian, and put out, as we have noticed above, mainly in the interest of Christians. They *alone* are named in it, and in one striking passage the general toleration to be enjoyed by different forms of religion is based upon the toleration accorded to Christianity. But one clause has a strange semi-Pagan colour. After giving to all the free choice to follow that mode of worship which they may wish, it adds that this promise was given in order that "Whatsoever Divinity and celestial power may exist might be propitious to us, and to all that live under our Government." The thought that underlies these words would seem to be: If, as is possible, any power belong to the old gods, it is well, by allowing men, if they please, to

worship them, that the gods in question should be propitiated by such worship. This suggests that the edict, so strongly in favour of Christianity was not avowedly *drafted* by a Christian; although, no doubt, in the main it was dictated, or at least inspired, by Constantine himself, who we know after his formal adhesion to Christianity as Emperor of a still Pagan Empire, continued to be the official head, as Pontifex Maximus, of the old religion.*

The proceedings at Milan in the spring of A.D. 313, for ever memorable on account of the edict which established Christianity as a legal religion, and which signified to the Roman world that the great Emperor had thrown in his lot with the long despised and outlawed sect, were rudely interrupted by intelligence which summoned the allied Emperors Constantine and Licinius to take the field. A raid of Frankish tribes in the Rhineland called for Constantine's presence once more at the head of his legions on the disturbed frontier, while a most dangerous civil war impending required Licinius in Eastern Europe to defend his dominions against the sudden invasion of Maximin Daia, who, with a powerful army, threatened the very existence of his Empire.

Maximin Daia, as we have seen, was a bigoted Pagan, and it is probable that the late events had roused the Pagan party to strike this blow in the hope of destroying, or, at least, of weakening, the powerful Christian influences which bade fair to undermine the old religion. It was well-nigh the last serious effort of Paganism. At first the arms of Maximin Daia were successful, and the city of Byzantium was invested and captured; but the victorious march was interrupted by the rapid advance of Licinius, by whose military skill the forces of the invader, although superior in numbers, were completely routed in a pitched battle near Heraclea. Maximin Daia fled, and, returning to his capital, Nicomedia, a beaten and disgraced Sovereign, died a few months after by his own hand. He perished apparently unregretted; the civil war in the East was over; and without further resistance Licinius was

* See Boissier, *Révue des Deux Mondes*. August, 1887, p. 528, and *La fin du Paganisme*, Vol. I., Chap. II., 11 (1898).

acknowledged Emperor of the East. Thus, before the year 313 had run its course, the provisions of the Edict of Milan, which assured peace and protection to the Christians, were received as the Imperial law without further opposition throughout the whole Roman world.

SECTION III.—AFTER THE EDICT OF MILAN.

It was a strange experience for the Christian subjects of the Empire to find themselves not merely tolerated but even favoured The open profession of belief by Constantine placed the long persecuted religion in a new light, and it is not difficult to conceive that vast numbers of all classes, under these new circumstances gradually joined the Christian communities. Licinius, the fellow Emperor of Constantine, it is true, was no real friend of Christianity; but the power and influence of the great Western Emperor from A.D. 313 to A.D. 321 ensured the freedom of Christian worship in the East where Licinius was supreme. A dispute and a short war between the two Emperors in A.D. 314, which ended in victory for the armies of Constantine, placed well-nigh all the provinces of Eastern Europe under the Western Sovereign.

In these years must be placed the foundation and, in some instances, the completion of not a few of the proud basilicas of the Constantinian period, notably the great churches of S. Peter on the Vatican, of S. Paul on the Ostian Way, of S. Laurence, of St. Agnes, and of the basilica and palace of the Bishops of Rome in the Lateran Gardens. These were in Rome; but in numberless cities of the Empire in these years churches were erected, some of great magnificence and splendidly adorned. Among these the basilica of Tyre is memorable owing to the detailed picture of this lordly fane contained in the inaugural discourse pronounced at Tyre by Eusebius (*H. E.*, x. 4). That such a magnificent building should arise in a city which had so lately taken the lead on the side of Paganism in the last days of the persecutions of Maximin Daia illustrates the power and opulence of the Christian party. "Nor would the Christian orator venture greatly to exaggerate the splendour of

a building which stood in the midst of and provoked, as it were, a comparison with temples of high antiquity and unquestioned magnificence."* The basilica of Tyre was only one among the many stately churches which arose in these early years of the peace of the Church, in Rome and in the chief cities of the Empire. And the student, as he reads the great historian's description of the Tyre basilica, evidently of vast proportions, with its rich sculptures, its roofs of cedar, its pavements of inlaid marbles, its arrangements for carefully ordered services, is amazed at the latent power and resources of the Christian sect, which only needed a few years of assured peace and Imperial favour to create such mighty works and to develop a ritual so stately and so elaborate.

It has been sorrowfully remarked that while Constantine could give protection, he could not give peace to Christianity and its inner life. Very early in its days of unlooked for prosperity the Church was rent with internal dissensions. These first quarrels, to us who look back through the long waste of centuries, seem to have sprung from seemingly unimportant causes. The old questions respecting the different degrees of guilt incurred by the "Lapsi," or those who had fallen away in the late persecution, were fiercely agitated, especially in the provinces of North Africa, ever a fruitful soil for these sad disputes. The validity of the election of Cæcilian, Bishop of Carthage, was called in question by a group of Numidian prelates, who alleged that he had been unlawfully consecrated by a certain Felix, Bishop of Aptunga, who, they said, had been a "traditor"—one who, under pressure, had given up to the Pagans the sacred books. The malcontents appealed to the civil power, and the Emperor relegated the cause to a council held at the Lateran under Miltiades, the Bishop of Rome. The Lateran Council decided in favour of Cæcilian. The African malcontents were not satisfied. And, as a consequence, a rival bishop was set up in Carthage. Constantine, in the hope of avoiding a permanent schism in the North African provinces, summoned a council from all parts

* See Dean Milman, *History of Christianity*, Book II., Chap. IX.; and Eusebius, *H. E.*, x.

of the West to meet at Arles in Gaul. This Arles Council, which met in the year 314, was the greatest ecclesiastical assembly that had been known, numbering as it did over two hundred bishops.* Pope Silvester, who had succeeded Miltiades as Bishop of Rome, was represented at Arles by two priests and two deacons. Again the decision was in favour of the legality of the consecration of Cæcilian. The details of this long drawn out and dangerous controversy do not belong to the scheme of our history. But some of the canons passed at Arles must be briefly noticed, as they throw considerable light on the connection of the fast-growing Christianity with *civil* society in the reign of Constantine at this period, A.D. 314. One of the most remarkable of these canons forbade, under pain of excommunication, any Christian to take part as an actor in any of the public games so popular among the people, particularising the parts of charioteer or comedian. Another canon of a different complexion supported with the weight of the Catholic Church, the duty of Christians towards the State by pronouncing the sentence of excommunication upon any Christian soldier who should, through any mistaken conscientious scruple,† decline to perform his military duties.

The influence of the Christian bishops and others among the leading men at the Court of Constantine during the ten years of which we are speaking, A.D. 313–23, was very marked. Some forty years later, in the brief Pagan reaction, the Emperor Julian bitterly notices this, commenting upon Constantine as

* The decision of this important council was again questioned, and Constantine agreed to hear in person the opposing parties at Milan, A.D. 316, where he upheld the decisions of Rome and Arles. The schismatics, who were styled "Donatists," after the anti-Bishop of Carthage, Donatus the Great, who had been elected by the dissidents in the room of Cæcilian, still declined to submit to the "Catholic" party, who maintained the validity of the election of Cæcilian as Bishop of Carthage in accordance with the decisions at Rome, Arles, and Milan. The Donatist schism long divided the Church of North Africa. These Donatists were a powerful and very numerous sect of Dissenters, including in their ranks at one time, it is said, as many as four hundred bishops! They professed, as other sectaries had done before them, an extreme austerity, and maintained that the true Church existed only in their communion.

† It will be remembered that about a century before this question had been argued by the eminent teacher Tertullian, who taught that a soldier, if a Christian, was justified in certain acts of insubordination.

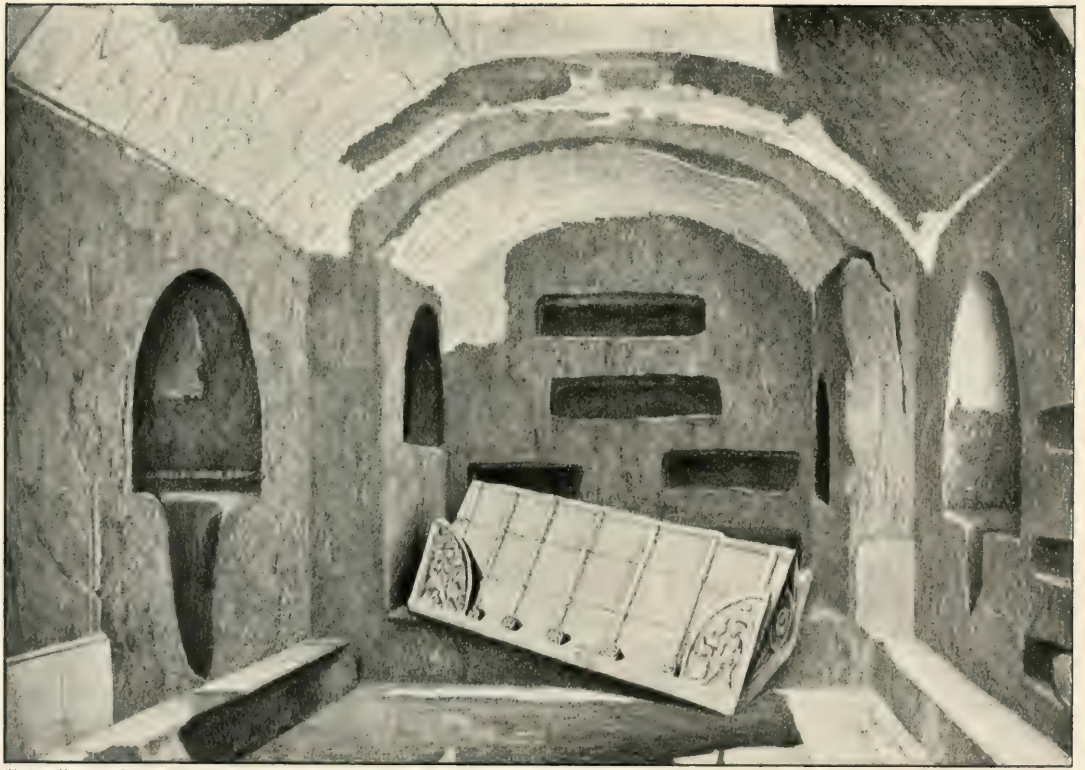


Photo: Mariani, Rome.

SEPULCHRAL CHAMBER IN THE CEMETERY OF S. CALLISTUS, NEAR THE PAPAL CRYPT.

Probably the tomb of Miltiades (A.D. 311), the last Pope buried in the Catacombs.

an innovator, as one who disturbed the ancient laws and upset the old customs.*

Amongst the new remarkable laws which were promulgated in the Empire in these years and which were directly attributable to Christian influences was the rescript directing the celebration of the Christian Sabbath; it was cautiously worded, and bore no special allusion to the peculiar sanctity of the day in the eyes of the Christian communities. Out of deference, no doubt, to the votaries of the ancient religion, it was termed "the day of the Sun," but it was to be generally observed, the law courts were to be closed, and the noise and bustle of public business were no longer to disturb the repose of the holy day. The only legal work that might be transacted was that connected with the manumission of slaves, a strange exception, and one undoubtedly due to the new spirit which was brooding over the Imperial chancery, which at this time issued various laws bearing on the relief of the great slave class. Other ordinances were put forth under the same Christian inspiration, such as the abrogation of the laws inimical to celibacy. Laws, too, dealing with immorality were passed. The punishment of crucifixion was significantly abolished. One most important concession appears at this time, giving the Church the fullest power to receive the bequests of the pious, an ordinance which had far-reaching consequences in after ages.

But, although the Emperor had accepted the groundwork of the Christian revelation, and had evidently resolved, as far as his conception of imperative duties imposed upon him as Emperor allowed, quietly to assist and promote the interests of the religion which he believed to be true, he resisted any attempt made by the more favoured sect to obtain through their religion any undue rights or privileges which, if acknowledged, might be inimical to the interests of the State. The ecclesiastical order had obtained, through the Imperial favour, an exemption from the necessity of serving in any of the burdensome and costly offices belonging to the municipalities; offices which at this time were disliked and, when possible,

* See Ammianus Marcellinus, xxi. 10.

avoided, on the just plea that the duties attendant on such offices were incompatible with their religious obligations. To secure their exemption from a hated duty many entered the clerical order. To remedy this manifest abuse of a privilege, Constantine decreed that none were to be admitted into the sacred order except on the vacancy of a religious charge, and then only those whose want of fortune exempted them from these costly municipal functions.*

The position of Constantine in these early years which succeeded the famous Edict of Milan was a somewhat strange one. He was a Christian not merely in name, but, as we have insisted, was really persuaded of the truth of the great Christian doctrines. But, at the same time, he was the supreme head of the Pagan religion of the Empire, which certainly for some years after A.D. 313 was still professed by the majority of his subjects. Constantine never seems to have laid aside the Imperial rank of Pontifex Maximus, or to have dispensed with the ancient Pagan titles upon his medals and coins. His apologists, with some justice, plead that it was his desire to maintain the public peace and tranquillity, which induced him to preserve these official ensigns of power over what was still the State religion. He was thus possessed of the supreme authority in both religions. Invested as he was with the right of superintending the ancient Pagan cult, he was enabled to restrict it in various ways, and gradually, without using any violent measures, to separate it from the ordinary social life of the citizens of the Empire, while it continued for a while to be the official worship. As early as A.D. 313, the year of the proclamation of the Edict of Milan, he declined to sanction the celebration of the secular games, the chief Pagan festival, and in the year 319 we find him

* The Decurions formed the Senates of the towns: they supplied the magistrates from their body, and had the right of electing them; under the regulations introduced by Diocletian the Decurions were made responsible for the full amount of taxation imposed by the Imperial assessment on the town and district. As the payments grew more burthensome many became insolvent and fled the district, but the whole revenue was still exacted from the Decurions; hence the once coveted office became a severe and hated burthen. See Milman, *History of Christianity*, Book III., Chap. II.

forbidding all *private* sacrificial ceremonies. The public and official rites seem to have been continued, but they were by degrees shorn of their ancient pomp and distinction as the coldness and dislike of the Emperor became more and more manifest and apparent. The rapid decay of Paganism was witnessed with apprehension and dismay by the more earnest of the still very numerous party who, for various reasons, adhered to the old Roman cult.

In the year 323 a civil war broke out between the two Emperors, Constantine and Licinius. The Eastern Emperor, under the dominant influence of his greater colleague, had signed the Edict of Milan; but it seems that Licinius never really favoured Christianity, and it was only with a half-hearted toleration that he suffered the worshippers of the Crucified openly to practise their religion in his Eastern dominions. It was to Licinius that the hopes of the Pagan party in the Empire turned when the rapid decay of their religion alarmed and disturbed them.

We have seen how in A.D. 314 discord between the two Emperors, in spite of the matrimonial connection—Licinius, it will be remembered, had married Constantine's half-sister, Constantia—precipitated a bitter civil war. This war ended in favour of Constantine, and the terms of peace included the cession to Constantine of the larger portion of the European dominions of Licinius. A hollow and uncertain peace which lasted some nine years from A.D. 314 to A.D. 323 succeeded. But the marked favour and encouragement showed by Constantine to Christians was viewed by his Eastern colleague with dislike and dread. Gradually the aversion of Licinius to Christianity was more and more openly manifested. Synods of clergy were at first forbidden, insulting decrees to Christian bishops were issued; in some of his provinces, in direct contravention of the Edict of Milan, Christian churches were closed, and at length a partial persecution was sanctioned. It was a final effort of Paganism to assert itself against the fast growing Christianity of the Empire. Once more a bitter civil war between the East and West blazed forth, which assumed the aspect of a contest of religions. Again the

superior genius of Constantine, and probably his better-equipped and disciplined legions, enabled him, after a short struggle, to vanquish his adversary. The campaign was soon concluded by a naval victory and by the yet more decisive battle of Hadrianople, in which Licinius suffered a complete defeat.

The death of Licinius which quickly followed left Constantine sole master of the East and West. The first act of the conqueror was at once to withdraw the recently promulgated anti-Christian edicts of the late Emperor of the East, and to grant to the Eastern followers of the Crucified all the privileges which his Christian subjects in the West had been long enjoying. The year 323 witnessed what was virtually the close of the long drawn out struggle between Christianity and Paganism.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM PAGANISM TO CHRISTIANITY.

SECTION I.—THE CHANGE.

THE tremendous issues of the change which had passed over the fortunes of the Christian religion after A.D. 313, the date of the Milan Edict, were probably foreseen by few at the time.

Indeed, the gradual progress of events had somewhat accustomed men's minds to the altered position of things. We will very briefly recount the principal steps which led up to the new platform upon which Christianity found itself in A.D. 323 and in the years immediately following, a platform from which it never had to recede. First, the abdication of Diocletian in A.D. 305, and the readjustment of the Imperial Government, put a stop to all active persecution throughout most of the Western provinces. Second, the Edict of Toleration issued by the dying Galerius in A.D. 311 gave a new aspect to the position of Christianity in the East; and, although its merciful provisions were temporarily set aside by Maximin Daia, persecution was generally looked on henceforth as a something absolutely alien to the universal policy of the Roman Empire. Third, the victorious campaign of Constantine under the banner of the cross, and the consequent union of the Western Empire under his sceptre, followed by the Edict of Milan, formally gave the Christian a legal status throughout the Empire. The ten years of Imperial favour which followed the edict witnessed an enormous increase in the numbers of the hitherto persecuted sect. Fourth, the efforts of the Pagan party in the East to regain its lost ground were completely defeated by the overthrow

and death of Licinius in A.D. 323 and the peaceable succession of the Emperor Constantine to the Eastern throne; the whole Roman world being thus united under the undisputed rule of a Christian Sovereign.

These great events had followed one another during the eighteen years which had elapsed since the abdication of Diocletian, and, although to all outward appearance the world was still Pagan, though "every city seemed still to repose under the tutelary gods of the ancient religion . . . the silent courts of the Pagan fanes were untrodden but by a few casual worshippers, the altars were without victims; thin wreaths of smoke rose where the air used to be clouded with the reek of hecatombs, the priesthood murmuring in bitter envy at the throng which passed by the porticoes of their temples towards the Christian Church."*

As regards many of the great nobles of the Empire, those who were more closely associated with the Emperor generally adopted the religion of the Sovereign and of the Court; but for a lengthened period very many of the patrician houses, and not a few among the cultured classes, haughtily stood aloof from the religion which in so marvellous a way had stirred the hearts of the men and women of the Empire. In the writings of the Pagans of the last half of the fourth century, a strange silence is observable respecting the undreamed of progress of the sect—a curious reticence on all the circumstances attendant on the tremendous victory of Christianity which that century had witnessed. We search, but search in vain, for detailed mentions of what must have been uppermost in the hearts of these passionate lovers of the storied past of Rome in the well-known and serious writings of the period. The letters of Symmachus, the proud and wealthy patrician, in which the life of the nobles of Rome is so vividly and picturesquely depicted, are silent. So are the writings of Macrobius and the histories of Aurelius Victor and Eutropius, who do not even deign to mention an event so striking as the conversion of Constantine. This almost universal silence is, however, broken in the curious

* Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, Book III., Chapter III.

Latin translation of the dialogue of Asclepius put out about the middle of this fourth century. Here the increasing cult of Christian martyrs is bitterly inveighed against, and the writer dwells with mournful eloquence on the fate of the ancient land of Egypt, deprived of her immemorial deities. "Oh, Egypt! Egypt!" he cries "nought remains of thy beliefs but confused echoes and a few inscriptions which may bear witness to coming generations of thy ancient piety. The gods who once dwelt with thee have gone back again into Heaven."*

The prevalent silence was again broken a little later by Rutilius Namatianus, a Gallic gentleman of high position, who very early in the fifth century filled distinguished offices at Rome, and became a senator. His words may fairly be taken as voicing the extreme dislike, even hatred, with which very many of the highest class viewed the rapid advance of Christianity. His undisguised opinions appear in a graceful little poem descriptive of a sea trip from Rome (Ostia probably) to South Gaul. He comes across a Jew—not a loved race by any means; but his great objection to the Jew is based upon the fact that Christianity sprang from a Jewish root—"radix stultitiæ" as he sorrowfully terms it. Sailing by the Isle of Capraria, at that time (*circa* A.D. 416) largely peopled—dishonoured, as he terms it—with Christian monks, he writes, "squalet lucifugis insula plena viris." Very bitterly he inveighs against these people, the monks, who avoid, as he thinks, the light of day. Is there any sense, he asks, in living a wretched life simply for fear of becoming unhappy? A little later he meets with another company of Christian solitaries, among whom he finds a wealthy and well-born man, who has thrown up his duties as a citizen, who has forsaken friends, family and wife, in order to bury himself alive in the sepulchres. The miserable man, so writes Rutilius, "dreams that Heaven is pleased with the sight of these unclean beings. They loved to torture themselves; they are more cruel even than the offended gods! I ask the question: has not this sect (the Christian) the secret of poisons more deadly than

* Augustine specially quotes this passage, *De Civitate Dei*, viii. 23.

any possessed by Circe?—for Circe only brought about a change in the body; these people change the very soul." Rutilius detested and loathed monasticism; but his contemptuous scorn for it is derived from his intense hatred of Christianity. To him it is only a natural outcome of a religion which debased the soul.

Among the class of noble, wealthy Romans in the provinces as in Italy, but especially in the great metropolis, Paganism died very slowly. These haughty descendants of the ancient patrician houses, and those who in the provinces recruited their ranks, as well as the rhetorician, the panegyrist, the poet, the historian, viewed the strange triumph-march of the Christians, which began in real earnest in A.D. 313, the date of the Milan Edict, with a shuddering disdain; they watched with a sorrow which refused to be comforted the ever-growing neglect of all the stately immemorial rites and ceremonies of an historic Paganism; they saw with deep murmuring the contempt into which the ancient gods of Rome and the Empire had fallen. And in the room of those gods who, as the translator of the "Dialogue of Asclepius," above referred to has it, had winged their flight away in grief from earth to Heaven, men had substituted a strange unnatural faith in "the Crucified"—a faith which their wiser and more far-sighted ancestors had pronounced unlawful, had condemned as the "exitiabilis superstitio" of Tacitus, as the "superstitio prava et immodica" of Pliny; a "superstitio" they had never deigned, however, to examine.

But for them the end* was soon to come, when their beliefs were to be swept away for ever in the wild torrent of barbarian invasion, while the Ark of the Church, which they hated and despised, floated safe and unharmed on the awful flood. The Pagan cult they loved and admired is only a

* How near the end was for the society in the midst of which these men of whom we are writing lived (it will be remembered that we have been speaking of the last few decades of the fourth century), the following dry but pregnant dates show: A.D. 410—Alaric the Goth sacks and burns Rome; A.D. 455—Genseric the Vandal again sacks and makes havoc of Rome; A.D. 476—Odoacer, the Herule Chieftain, occupies Rome, sweeping away the last remnant of Imperial majesty.

Photo : Alinari & Cook, Rome.

THE TEMPLE OF CASTOR AND POLLUX.

With the Forum, looking towards the Capitol.

memory surviving among a handful of curious scholars. The Church, though fifteen hundred more changing and changeful years have since come and gone, is with us still, the greatest and most enduring power in the world.

But what of the rank and file of the population of the Empire? What of the masses of the people? What of the many millions who were not of senatorial rank, who possessed no palaces in the fashionable quarters of Rome, or Carthage, or Antioch, or Milan, or Lyons, who owned no villas in the hills round Rome or on the shores of the charmed Italian and Sicilian seas—who were neither rhetoricians nor poets, philosophers nor historians—the millions who could not be described as cultured—what of all these? How from the year 313 onward were *these* affected towards Christianity?

It will be remembered how again and again in the story of Christianity from the year 64, and even earlier, in countless centres of population, a fierce persecution frequently arose owing to hostile denunciations by the populace. Very little, apparently, was needed at all times to excite them against a sect which from various reasons was indubitably disliked by the masses. Now it was the Jews who stirred up the popular enmity; now it was the jealous priests of the Pagan cult; not unfrequently it was the anger of traders who were injured by the teaching and practice of Christianity. One or other of these classes of a city population would often stir up their fellow citizens, who were only too ready to force the somewhat reluctant magistrates to harass and persecute the sect.

But after the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, probably at a somewhat earlier date in the Western provinces of the Empire, a different spirit evidently prevailed. The edicts favourable to Christianity seem to have been quietly received, even approved, and in many places positively welcomed; and vast and ever-increasing numbers of the population hitherto Pagan joined the Christian communities. Here and there, it is true, we hear of a popular demonstration against the Christians, such as took place in Alexandria, but such temporary outbreaks wree

put down without difficulty. *Something* had evidently happened to bring about this great change in popular opinion.

The conversion of Constantine and the Edict of Milan have been usually alleged as the causes of the strange and rapid conversion of "the masses" of the Empire to the religion of the Crucified. But without detracting from the importance of these events, we would urge that other and very different causes were at work which really brought about this wonderful and swift change in the hearts of the people.

A study of certain Christian writers and workers in the second half of the fourth century suggests that a deep impression was made upon the masses, *i.e.* the people generally of the Roman Empire, by the sufferings and conduct of the Confessors in the great Diocletian persecution. The imagery adopted by Prudentius, the Spanish poet of the second half of the fourth century, would have had absolutely no meaning did it not represent a popular feeling which must certainly have come into existence *before* the middle of the fourth century. Thus in the *Peri-Stephanón*, iv., Christ is spoken of as sanctifying a great city like Saragossa (Cæsar Augusta); whole cities are described as finding shelter and comfort in the day of the great Assize under the shadow of the strong protection of some martyr or martyrs who had been specially honoured by the dwellers therein.

Again, much of the long later life of the once renowned and popular Saint Paulinus of Nola is taken up with the question of "pilgrimages." He tells us of early impressions stamped on his childish mind by the sight of the crowds of pilgrims to the humble shrine of S. Felix of Nola; and as Paulinus was born A.D. 353, Christianity must have permeated the masses before the middle of the century to have brought such a number of devotees to a humble and little-known shrine during his childhood. Now Nola was but a comparatively humble instance of many other more famous Martyr-shrines. Within fifty years after the promulgation of the Milan Edict, it would seem as though Christianity had taken by storm the hearts of the vast majority of the masses of the people.

This impression is confirmed by the records of the well-

known and elaborate works carried out by Pope Damasus during his episcopate at Rome A.D. 366–384. When Damasus began his memorable pontificate little more than half-a-century had elapsed since the Peace of the Church had been proclaimed. The works of restoration and renovation would have been meaningless had they not been designed for the devout visits of a vast number of Christian pilgrims from distant countries to the many sacred tombs of confessors and martyrs for the Faith who had suffered at Rome. It is obvious that the passion for pilgrimage to martyr-shrines had already, before the period of his Episcopate, permeated the people not only in Rome but also in far distant provinces.

Surely then we are not in error when we assert our belief that Christianity very early in the fourth century, certainly from the date of the Edict of Milan, A.D. 313, had gained the key to the hearts of the people.* From signs no candid student can safely neglect or pass over, it seems clear that the events connected with the last great persecution largely contributed to this result. Its extent, the extreme severity of its edicts, the terrible thoroughness with which these edicts were carried out, the numbers, the constancy and brave patience of the confessors, although in the Western Provinces of the Empire it only lasted a little over two years, must have made an extraordinary impression on the people. Its progress was made easy—when once the supreme Government of the Empire ceased to be hostile to and even looked with favour upon the long persecuted religion, when once the unlawfulness of being a Christian was done away with by Imperial edicts, formally sanctioning the profession of the Christian cult. But no mere favour and patronage of the Emperor and the Court could ever have won for Christianity that widespread acceptance among the people which was noticeable even before the first half of the fourth century had run its course. *Something* more was needed; that something the persecution of Diocletian and the conduct of the sufferers in the persecution in large measure provided.

To the nature of this revulsion of feeling witness is borne

* See pp. 494–6.

by the writings and the records left by some prominent Christians in the latter half of the fourth century. To these we shall now refer in detail.

SECTION II.—TYPICAL STUDIES: (*a*) PRUDENTIUS.

We select then for our purpose four distinguished men: Prudentius, the Spanish poet, S. Paulinus of Nola, somewhile a statesman, later an ascetic and a popular writer, Damasus, the famous Roman bishop, to each of whom reference has already been made; and S. Martin, the loved Bishop of Tours in Gaul.

Of these, *Prudentius*, the Spanish poet, not only speaks for his own country of Spain, but also gives us considerable information connected with other parts of the Empire, notably in Italy and Rome. *Paulinus of Nola* represents largely popular opinion in Italy and Gaul. *Damasus* and his work speak for the Christian communities of the capital and for the vast numbers of visitors and pilgrims from many lands to the sanctuaries of Rome. *S. Martin* is the representative *par excellence* of the vast province of Gaul.

The dates of the four are as follows :—

	Born. A.D.	Died. A.D.
Prudentius	348	405
Paulinus of Nola	353	431
Damasus, Bishop of Rome from	366	384*
Martin of Tours	316	400

Prudentius apparently belonged to a Christian family, but in early and middle life religion does not appear to have much influenced his life and conduct. He was a lawyer of some distinction, and his career, a brilliant and prosperous one, culminated in his appointment to an important provincial governorship. Something occurred in that sunny, successful life which determined him to give up his public career as a servant of the State. Retiring from the world, he resolved to devote the evening of his life to literary pursuits, devoting

* These eighteen years represent his Roman episcopate.

his pen exclusively to the assistance of the religion he felt was so intensely real and true. He soon showed that he was a poet of no ordinary power, and he consecrated this power to the service of the Crucified Master, Who had summoned him at a comparatively late hour to His side.

We have still with us several of his works, which include his dogmatic poems and his collection of hymns which have as their theme the various divisions of the day "Kathemerinon," as it is termed; besides his answer to Symmachus the Senator, when that statesman claimed that the altar of "Victory" should be restored to the old place which it occupied when the august Senate legislated for a Pagan Rome. As poems, though they belong to so late a date in Latin literature, they are unmistakably the work of a master; the "Answer to Symmachus" being besides a piece of real historical importance.

But a more special interest attaches to his *Peri-Stephanôn*, "The Book of the (Martyrs') Crowns." It contains fourteen distinct hymns or poems, several of them of considerable length. The theme of these pieces is the "passions" of certain once-famous martyrs, the various circumstances of their trials, the final victories of these hero-sufferers for the Faith.

This work is quite original in its character, it is framed on no earlier model, and Prudentius may be said to have had no subsequent imitator. Much of it is taken up with reproductions of scenes in Pagan Courts, when the Christian hero, or heroine as the case might be, was accused, examined, tortured, and then led out to a death of agony which was endured without flinching, the brave confessor welcoming indeed with unfeigned gladness the bitter suffering for the Lord's sake. These hymns attained a wide popularity, and some of them apparently were read or sung in churches, being substituted for the prose Acts and Passions of Martyrs which were frequently read on the day when the confessor was especially commemorated.

These fervid and impassioned poems or hymns cannot, of course, be received as faithful and exact pictures of what took place in the Diocletian or in the yet earlier persecutions; but

they do represent what the popular imagination in the years immediately following the last great trials and sufferings pictured to itself as having taken place. The basis of the stories was true, but the popular fancy added many a legend to the simple original facts, and these legends were utilised by our poet.

It is the halo of glory surrounding these martyrs that especially strikes the historian. We see in these popular poems what a profound, what a lasting, impression the sufferings of the martyrs had made on the people of the Roman Empire. The saint-sufferer, man or woman, became soon positively an object of something more than reverence. Their noble confession, their splendid courage and endurance for the Faith's sake, so thought the people, had won for the brave confessor a strange power in Heaven, so that whatever they asked at the throne of God would be granted to their prayers. This Prudentius evidently held, when in his impassioned verse he thus apostrophised one of the saints of his hymns: "Hear me, O blessed Spirit. I am unworthy that Christ should listen to my prayer for pardon, but if thou wilt speak for me to the Master, He will surely listen to thy voice" (*Peri-Stephanôn*, ii. 572).

To Prudentius, and to those for whom he wrote, the noble army of martyrs, so largely recruited in the persecution of the first years of the century, were already in the enjoyment of the beatific vision of God, and their powerful intercession was eagerly sought by sufferers alike in body and in mind.

The saint heroes and heroines of Prudentius belong to no one land, to no solitary nationality, but in the heart of the poet, his own loved Spain evidently holds the foremost place. We possess indeed but few records of the days of the last persecution in Spain, but the vivid and fiery verses tell us how sharp and bitter must have been the harrying of Christians, how numerous the Spanish sufferers, in that dread time. Nowhere was the truth of the well-known saying that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church more conspicuously exemplified than in Spain, the home of Prudentius.

When our poet wrote in the second half of the fourth century, the cult of the martyrs was widely spread throughout the country. Already well-nigh every city of importance boasted

what may be termed its patron saint or saints. Thus Emerita (Merida) was proud of the girl-confessor Eulalia, to whose memory the citizens had speedily raised a noble church; its interior glittering with gold and coloured work, and bright with variegated mosaics and costly marbles. Tarragona was styled "happy" (felix) Tarragona, under the protection of its saintly bishop, the martyr Fructuosus. Saragossa (Cæsar Augusta), however, surpassed all other cities, in our poet's estimate, ranking only after Rome and Carthage, since it possessed the greatest number of martyrs, the presence of whose ashes sanctified the whole place, where Christ reigned indeed as Sovereign Lord.*

Nor was the protection in Heaven of these martyrs only a present help to those who sought their succour and intercession in days of sickness, and in hours of sorrow. In the bloody and fiery dawn of the final judgment of the world, the confessors of the great persecution would not only be at hand to succour individuals who had honoured and paid them homage, but under the shadow of their strong protection whole cities, where their memory had been venerated, would find shelter and comfort. Perhaps the grandest of the many striking pictures painted by Prudentius in this Epic of Martyrdom, is the one where he describes, in his musical and stirring cadences, the Epiphany of the awful Judge descending in fiery clouds from Heaven, ready to weigh the peoples in His scales of judgment; and there, before the Judge, the Spanish cities pass, each one carrying the relics of the saint and martyr it had long honoured, and in whose guardianship it had trusted.†

* "Christus in totis habitat plateis,
Christus ubique est." *Peri-Stephanôn*, iv.

† "Quum Deus dextram quatiens coruscam
Nube subnixus veniet rubente,
Gentibus justam positurus æquo
Pondere libram;
Orbe de magno caput excitata
Obviam Christo properanter ibit
Civitas quæque pretiosa portans
Dona canistris.
Sterne te totam generosa sanctis
Civitas mecum tumulis; deinde
Mox resurgentes animas et artus
Tota sequeris" *Peri-Stephanôn*, iv.

Such a poem with its lofty and soul-stirring imagery, with its new, strange beliefs, is something more than the outcome of the inspiration of a solitary individual, it is evidently the expression of a people's thoughts.

Prudentius, in many of his startling and rousing verses, is evidently the mouthpiece of a great multitude. Erroneous and exaggerated though much of his teaching was, evoking as it soon did the warning voices of serious and responsible scholars like the great Augustine, there is no mistaking its source of inspiration. What Prudentius wrote and clearly himself believed was without doubt the popular creed of the people among whom he lived, and who read and loved the pathetic and soul-stirring lilts of their favourite song man.

(*b*) PAULINUS OF NOLA.

Nor was this outcome of the last great persecution, this enthusiasm of the masses for the Christian martyrs, confined to Spain and her popular poet; precisely the same devotion to the martyr for the Faith, the same curious trust in the superhuman efficacy of the martyr's intercession, is conspicuous in the writings of Paulinus of Nola, who may be taken as the representative of popular feeling in southern and central Gaul and in Italy. Paulinus was a contemporary of Prudentius, his poetry being written in the last quarter of the fourth and early years of the following century.

This Paulinus spent his youth and middle life in Gaul and Italy, and his later years exclusively in Nola, a city of Campania, dying at an advanced age Bishop of Nola, about the year 431.

He was the heir of a very noble and extremely wealthy family; among his ancestors were not a few persons who had attained to the highest dignities in the Roman Empire. Gaul proudly claims Paulinus as one of her sons, his father having chosen as his chief residence Bordeaux, in which city the young Paulinus was born. He had for his tutor the celebrated rhetorician and poet Ausonius, who became later the tutor of Gratian, the Emperor Valentinian's son. Ausonius was extremely proud of his

pupil Paulinus, and used his great influence to procure his speedy advancement to the Consular dignity, and when Paulinus withdrew himself altogether from the world, determining to apply his great talents, his enormous wealth, and the prestige of his eminent name to devotion and to furthering what he deemed the best interests of Christianity, his whilom tutor warmly and affectionately remonstrated with him, urging him to give up his newly-formed plans of life.* It was about A.D. 389 that Paulinus finally gave up the world in which he promised to play so brilliant a part. For some thirty-five years or more, he resided at Nola, a small Campanian city, where a little basilica had been erected over the tomb of S. Felix, a martyred presbyter, whose memory was tenderly cherished in that part of Italy, and whose shrine was the object of the visit of innumerable pilgrims. This basilica he rebuilt at a great cost, erecting around it elaborate buildings for the entertainment of pilgrims to the shrine.

During this long period of retirement Paulinus by no means gave up his literary labours, but he devoted them exclusively to religion. He has left behind him, among other works, a valuable volume of letters, and a still more interesting collection of poems, many of them of considerable merit; poems which he wrote annually, on the occasion of the festival of S. Felix, largely bearing on the merits and good offices of the saint to men, but containing many vivid pictures illustrative of the popular aspects of Christianity in the latter years of the fourth and the early years of the fifth century; of which poems some five thousand lines have been preserved.

The special attraction which brought the illustrious convert to the shrine of Felix and induced him to spend the long protracted autumn of his life under the shadow of the Church

* It has been questioned whether or not this famous Man of Letters, who for a time was one of the more influential personages of the Roman world, in the second half of the fourth century, can be properly termed a Christian. On the whole it appears that at all events *outwardly* he professed Christianity. In his works, however, little or nothing is found which indicates any real belief in the doctrines of the Faith. M. Boissier, in his study *Le Fin du Paganisme*, ii., 11, well sums up the position here of Ausonius: "Evidemment le Chrétianisme a glissé sur lui, et n'a jamais penetré jusqua son âme."

which arose over the martyr's tomb, is not at first sight very evident.

It appears, however, that when a boy he had been taken to the little basilica on the occasion of the saint's yearly festival. His child-mind was impressed with what he saw, the miracles worked by the powerful intercession of the saint, the crowd of worshippers who thronged the little church, the earnest devotion of the pilgrim-visitors. These things were never, so he tells us himself, forgotten; and far on in middle life, the longing for a closer walk with God gradually took possession of him, absorbing all his thoughts, colouring all his projects. Paulinus attributed this strange change passing over him to the direct intervention and mediation of the martyr-saint. Gratitude to S. Felix determined him to fix his permanent abode hard by the tomb where the sacred remains rested. Henceforth he would watch over the holy spot himself, would even every morning play the humble part of sweeper of the threshold of the church, which he determined to enlarge and beautify, making fresh and ample provision for the reception and entertainment of the many pilgrims, who in ever-increasing numbers frequented the holy place. Paulinus' purpose remained unchanged; for some thirty-five years he dwelt in the little Campanian city, only quitting it once a year when he used to go to Rome and pray at the hallowed shrines of the martyr-apostles SS. Peter and Paul. In addition to the work he carried out in the basilica and shrine of Felix, and in the pilgrims' buildings adjacent, he built a small monastery, to use a term which belonged to a somewhat later period; where, with his wife, whom he termed his sister, and a few like-minded friends, he led an austere and self-denying life, in which he asserted that he found a happiness and delight utterly unknown to him in his former days, when as a wealthy patrician, high in the favour of the Emperor, he played the part of an important Roman official of the highest rank.

How deep was the attachment felt and the devotion shown towards the martyr Felix, not only by the poor and sick, but by trained, highly-educated men like the cultured Paulinus, is shown by such an apostrophe as the

following: "Be kind and propitious to your faithful followers, I have been tossed on the waves of the sea and on the heaving waters of the world, and I have come at last to such a quiet haven of rest close to thee, I have laid up my bark and fastened it to thy shore."

Our "cloistered" poet dwells on the number of pilgrims to the popular* shrine of the Nola martyr. Every year these devotees grew more numerous. They came, many of them, from distant Italian provinces and cities, from Apulia and Calabria, from Naples and Capua, from Latium and the metropolis. He indulges in some rhetorical expressions when he mentions the enthusiasm shown by citizens and dwellers in Rome, which sent her thousands to little Nola whenever the anniversary festival of S. Felix came round. The Appian Way, he says, was literally hidden by the pilgrim crowd. He dwells on the miracles which he saw worked at the shrine of his favourite saint, miracles of healing, especially on the "possessed" by evil spirits. Very kind was S. Felix to all poor folk, hence his widely extended popularity. He tells us how the glorified martyr loved to listen to the prayers of these humble devotees, and did not disdain to grant even their curious requests for their sick beasts. These, he says, were constantly healed as a result of their petitions.

But Paulinus' faith in the power of his martyr-saint went far beyond these comparatively humble manifestations of supernatural powers.

The early years of the fifth century witnessed the beginnings of the final ruin of the Roman Empire in the West. When the immediate danger of the invasion of Radagaisus the Sclavonian, and his barbarian host, was averted by the victory of Stilicho the general of Honorius, the annual poem of Paulinus in honour of his saint commences with a glad note of triumph. It was in truth a strange hymn of thanksgiving; the writer ascribes the great victory of Roman civilisation over barbarism to the intercession of S. Felix, who, uniting his prayers to the Lord with those of SS. Peter and

* Paulinus indulges in a play on the martyr's name: "O felix Felice tuo tibi præsule Nola."

Paul, had obtained a respite for the sorely-harassed and threatened Empire. Its days were to be prolonged in consequence of the powerful mediation of these saints.

The ascription of such a mediatorial influence to the great Apostles was a grave and utterly baseless innovation in the primitive teaching contained in the Master's Gospel, but to associate with these great ones, in such a tremendous responsibility, a comparatively unknown martyr like S. Felix of Nola was indeed to advance a novel and a startling claim; that it was put forward by one subsequently so well known and revered in the Church as S. Paulinus of Nola is a striking testimony to the exalted and exaggerated position to which the martyrs of the persecutions had attained, at all events in the popular Christianity of the day.*

(c) S. MARTIN OF TOURS.

S. MARTIN, Bishop of Tours, A.D. 316–97, in the course of the second half of the fourth century attracted enormous love and veneration from the numerous Christian congregations of Gaul, leaving behind him an unsurpassed reputation for devotion and sympathy, for boundless charity and kindness to all sorts and conditions of men; his beautiful life-story is the chief subject of the writings of his eminent scholar-disciple, Sulpicius Severus. S. Martin followed the almost universal practice of his age in paying extreme reverence and even worship to the remains of martyrs for the Faith. Only before sanctioning these acts of devotion, he required solid proofs that the dead saint to be venerated was in very truth deserving of the honour which the credulous people were only too ready to offer.

* It may possibly be pleaded, in extenuation of these extraordinary assertions respecting the power of the martyrs of the persecutions to influence the Most High in His dealings with men, that the assertions above quoted from Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola appear in poems; and that the writers in making them used a poet's licence of exaggeration in their fervid pictures of the unseen world. But these poems, it must be remembered, were of the nature of hymns, and contained without doubt the creed of the devout and earnest writers; they also, it is clear, too faithfully represented the "credenda" of the mass of the people who read and listened to these glowing popular lilts.

The most striking feature of S. Martin's life is the enormous influence he evidently exercised upon the rank and file of the population in the great Gallic provinces.

He was no writer or scholar like the other three whom we have here selected to dwell on; he was simply a man of rare gifts in inspiring sympathy. The almost boundless power which he evidently obtained over the hearts of the inhabitants of Gaul from about the year 353, shows us that a large proportion of these provincials, if not already Christians, were kindly disposed to the sect. S. Martin is represented by his devoted biographer, Sulpicius Severus, not as the great missionary to a Pagan people, but as completing a work already largely done. He is spoken of as the instrument by which the *remaining Pagans of Gaul*, especially in the southern and middle districts, were brought to the confession of the Crucified.

And no small portion of his labours was devoted to winning over erring Christians, heretical Christians, to the Catholic Faith. When, full of years and honour, he passed away in the last year of the century, we hear of the citizens of two important Gallic cities, Poitiers and Tours, warmly disputing the possession of the remains of the loved teacher; and when Tours succeeded in obtaining the coveted prize, the whole city is represented as coming out to meet the body of S. Martin, together with about two thousand monks.

(*d*) DAMASUS, BISHOP OF ROME.

Of the eminent teachers and Christian leaders of the fourth century, Damasus, Bishop of Rome (A.D. 366–384), perhaps did more than any other to further the cult of the martyrs. Pope Damasus was a prominent figure in the Church life of that century which witnessed the triumph of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. But the work for which he is best known is his elaborate restoration of the catacombs, which as the resting-place of so many martyrs, were an object to him of special interest.

It was no mere antiquarian, or even religious, zeal for the works of his fathers in the Faith which inspired Pope Damasus

to undertake so many and important operations* in the City of the Christian Dead; but it was above all an ardent devotion to the martyrs whose remains had been deposited there at different periods. It was the same spirit of loving admiration for the heroes of the Faith, an admiration which too quickly shaded into devotion, which inspired the poems of Paulinus of Nola, the same spirit which lives along the pages of the hymns of Prudentius on "The Crowns of the Martyrs," a spirit which may be regarded as a remarkable feature of popular Christianity in the first years of its triumph.

Damasus' long and patient work was a labour of love. With immense pains and care in many places† he removed the earth and re-opened the closed corridors and sepulchral chambers, which had been earthed-up in the days of the Decian or Diocletian persecutions; he widened a vast number of the passages so as to make them accessible to the crowds of pilgrims, who, from all lands, wandered to Rome, to pray at these sacred shrines of the dead; and even constructed many flights of stairs leading down to the more illustrious tombs. In some more special cases he adorned the chambers with costly marbles, and opened shafts to admit air and light, when it was practicable, to facilitate the pilgrim visits. In nearly all the catacombs that have yet been investigated traces of these labours of Pope Damasus have been found, and as the excavations advance, fragments, large and small, of the beautifully-chiselled inscriptions of his famous artist Filocalus, are constantly being found. The works carried out during his Pontificate gave a great impetus to that passion for pilgrimage to the martyrs' shrines, which became henceforth a marked and enduring feature in Christian life.

So persistent and so general had this "cult" of the martyrs become that grave alarm was excited among certain of the more

* Pope Marcellinus, Bishop of Rome A.D. 296–308, and his deacon Severus for instance, earthed-up the famous Papal crypt in the catacomb of S. Callistus, and the adjacent chambers. These were in part excavated by Pope Damasus and restored.

† One of the inscriptions of Pope Damasus, found on the tomb of S. Eutychius in the catacomb of S. Sebastian, runs as follows: QUÆRITUR, INVENTUS COLITUR ———

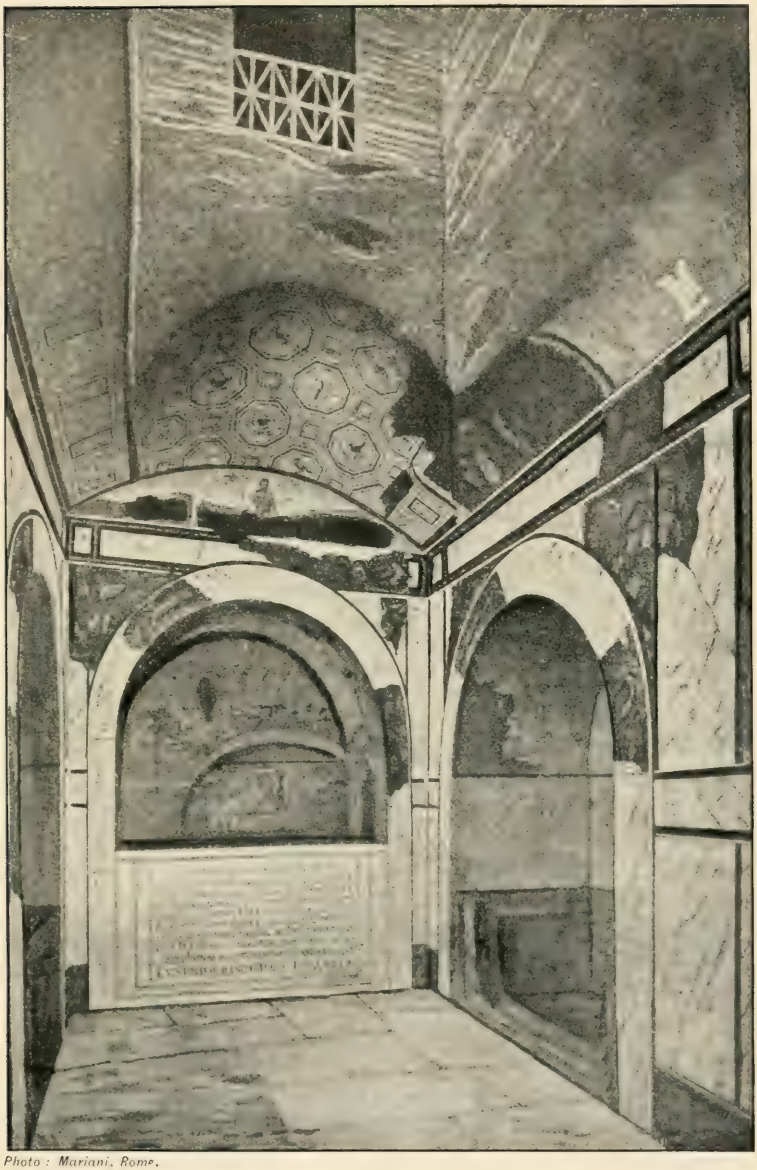


Photo : Mariani, Rome.

THE TOMB OF S. EUSEBIUS, BISHOP AND MARTYR, A.D. 310.

A Chamber in the Cemetery of S. Callistus. The inscription is a Sixth Century restoration of that put up by Pope Damasus, of which fragments were found on the floor.

thoughtful Christian theologians. A note of warning was struck, perhaps with over-much bitterness, by one Vigilantius, in whom some have seen a very early pioneer of Luther. Vigilantius, born in Aquitaine, in Southern Gaul, about A.D. 370, was a friend, possibly a pupil, of Sulpicius Severus, of whom we have already spoken as the companion and biographer of S. Martin of Tours. For a time he lived in some intimacy with Paulinus of Nola and with Jerome. He was subsequently ordained and became a presbyter, settling in Gaul, or perhaps in Spain; in his later life he wrote a work, which obtained considerable celebrity, against superstitious practices, notably against relic worship, and the vigils in the basilicas of the martyrs. The treatise in question is lost, and is only known to us through the writing of Jerome, *Contra Vigilantium*, in which work the great Latin Doctor bitterly inveighs against the opinions of the Gallic divine. Largely, it would seem, in consequence of this unfavourable judgment of Jerome, Vigilantius came to be ranked among heretics. But the note of alarm which he struck gives us some indication that the exaggerated reverence for martyrs upon which we have been dwelling was gravely misliked, at least by a section of theological teachers.

But a far more considerable theologian than Vigilantius was also disturbed at the rapid growth and universal prevalence of the martyr cult. The great Augustine (A.D. 354–430) bitterly grieves over the popular superstition which led uneducated and superstitious crowds to kneel in adoration before the tombs of famous confessors of the Faith. He takes some pains to define the style of homage which might fairly be paid to saints and martyrs. "We," he writes, "do not treat these as deities; we have no intention of imitating the Pagans here, who adore the dead, we erect no temples in their honour, we adorn for them no altars, but with their remains we raise an altar to the one God."* When the relics of S. Stephen were brought with great ceremony to Augustine's church at Hippo, he took the greatest pains that the enthusiasm of the people should be restrained from all extravagant excesses.

* Compare S. Aug., *De Moribus Eccl. Cathol.*, 34–76, and Sermons 273, 280, 318, 325.

Yet in spite of sober theologians of the Catholic Church the mischief* to a great extent was done. But with the theological question, with the consequent errors and superstition so disfiguring to Christianity, the historian has little to do. We have dwelt at some length upon this strange development, so general and so widespread, because it sprang almost wholly and entirely out of the last and final persecution of Diocletian. That supreme effort of Paganism was, as we have seen, gigantic, far-reaching, desperate. It harried uncounted thousands of every class and order: the sufferings which paganism inflicted upon its Christian foes were indeed terrible, but the very magnitude of the effort was one of the causes of its ultimate, its complete defeat. There were, of course, some, perhaps many, Christians whose hearts failed them in view of the awful suffering which lay before them. But on the whole, the courage, the brave patience, the noble constancy, of the Christian congregations enabled them to endure all rather than fail. A very great number shed their blood, and in pain and agony, borne in brave patience for the Name's sake, passed to their rest in the Paradise of God. Many more, who were not condemned to death, endured the loss of all things that made life pleasant and joyous.

But all this great suffering, the noble, patient endurance of the confessors, the spilt blood of the martyrs, was not for nought. Innumerable Pagan bystanders watched, and when at last the persecutors stayed their hands, and the Christians were left alone, largely owing to their persecutors growing weary of inflicting wrongs and suffering upon an unresisting folk, multitudes, who had *seen* and marvelled how their old foes had borne all, had suffered and had died rather than recant, determined to throw in their lot with the strange people who had been evidently helped in the deadly struggle by some unseen, mighty power.

This is the explanation of the sudden conversion to Christianity of a large portion of the subjects of the great Empire on the

* The grave injury done to the spiritual life of the Church of the fourth century, by the introduction of these novelties into her teaching, is alluded to in the next Chapter (XVII.).

morrow of the proclamations by the Government of "Peace" for the Church.

The reasons of the extravagant glorification of the martyrs on which we have just dwelt are not far to seek. No honour was too great to show to the more conspicuous among the late sufferers for the Faith. The old man and the young girl, the senator and the slave, who in especially trying circumstances, had shown the sublime courage of the Christian martyr, became at once the objects of popular reverence. Nay, more, those noble souls who had borne so splendid a witness, were surely *now*, so many loved to think, very close to the Master for Whom, and for Whose cause they had died; surely He could refuse nothing to such brave and devoted servants.* They would ask *these* glorified ones who had been so lately among them, of their company, in their homes, partners of their sorrows and their joys, to speak for them to their Lord. They, the martyrs, surely had only to ask a boon, and it would be at once granted. Hence the martyr cult. Its genesis is not difficult to grasp. It was, of course, a sad error, and a grievous one, deplorable indeed in its far-reaching consequences, but we can understand exactly how it came about.

* The feeling of passionate reverence for these bravely patient sufferers for the Truth's sake was not peculiar to the men and women of the fourth and fifth centuries. It inspired one of the noblest passages in one of our latest philosophic writers.

"For the love of their Divine Master, for the cause they believed to be true, men and even weak girls endured these things without flinching, when one word would have freed them from their sufferings. No opinion we may form of the proceedings of priests in a later age should impair the reverence with which we bend before the martyr's tomb."—Lecky: *Hist. of European Morals*, vol. i., chap. iii., pp. 497–8.

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH.

SECTION I.—CHRISTIANITY AND THE FALL OF THE EMPIRE.

To the reader of the foregoing chapters of this volume, containing the recital of the great struggle between Christianity and Paganism, a few pressing questions naturally suggest themselves respecting the fortunes of the Church after the great and sudden change which passed over it in the first quarter of the fourth century.

Without attempting anything like a connected history of the years which directly followed the Edict of Milan, a brief reply may be given to the questions which seem to press for an immediate answer. These are introduced by the inquiries:

(1) What brought about the sudden and rapid conversion of the majority of the peoples of the Empire?

(2) Was the ruin of the Empire, the result of the barbarian invasions in the century following the general acceptance of Christianity, attributable in any way to this acceptance of Christianity?

(3) What was the attitude of Christianity towards the unhappy citizens of the fallen Empire, and the swarms of barbarian invaders who in the fourth and fifth centuries overran her territories, sweeping away Roman society throughout all the Western provinces, including Gaul, Britain, Spain, Italy, and North Africa?

(1) The first of these questions, "What brought about the sudden and rapid conversion of the majority of the peoples of the Empire?" has been already touched upon. It seems that a deep impression was made upon the inhabitants of

many of the provinces by the behaviour of the Christians in the course of the last terrible persecution carried on under the name of Diocletian and his colleagues, so that when the Imperial decree in favour of the long persecuted sect was promulgated it found a ready acceptance among the multitudes. But much had been done already by the teaching and practice of the Christians towards gaining the hearts of the people during the preceding two and a half centuries. The seed had been sown, and it only needed the powerful impulse to which we have been referring to mature it. Men had gradually come to see what Christianity really was, what a pure and noble system it taught, and how capable it was of realisation in action. "Amid the softening influence of philosophy and civilisation it taught the supreme sanctity of love. To the slave who had never before exercised so large an influence over Roman religious life it was the religion of the suffering and the oppressed. To the philosopher it was at once the echo of the highest ethics of the later Stoics, and the expansion of the best teaching of the school of Plato. To a world thirsting for prodigy it offered a history replete with wonders. . . . To a world that had grown very weary gazing on the cold, passionless grandeur which Cato realised and which Lucan sang, it presented an ideal of compassion and of love, an ideal destined for centuries to draw around it all that was greatest as well as all that was noblest on earth—a Teacher who could weep by the sepulchre of His friend, who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. To a world, in fine, distracted by hostile creeds and colliding philosophies, it taught its doctrines, not as a human speculation but as a Divine revelation. . . . One great cause of its success was that it produced more heroic actions and formed more upright men than any other creed. . . . There was no doubt that Christianity had transformed the characters of multitudes, vivified the cold heart by a new enthusiasm, redeemed, regenerated and emancipated the most depraved of mankind. Noble lives, crowned by heroic deaths, were the best arguments of the infant Church. Their enemies not infrequently acknowledged it. The love shown by the early

Christians to their suffering brethren has never been more emphatically attested than by Lucan, or the beautiful simplicity of their worship than by Pliny, or their ardent charity than by Julian. . . ." *

(2) The second question stands thus: "Was the ruin of the Empire, brought about by the barbarian invasions in the century following the general acceptance of Christianity, attributable in any way to this acceptance of Christianity?"

The accusation—that in the abandonment of the ancient religion of the Empire must be sought and found the cause of the misfortunes and ruin of the world-wide Roman domination—reaches back to the fourth and fifth centuries, the epoch of the ruin and misfortune. The first and in some ways the most obvious plea urged at that time was that the desolation of the Empire was owing to the anger of the deserted and offended gods, who naturally left to themselves peoples who had contemptuously abandoned their worship; a plea put forward with earnestness and zeal by believers in Paganism—still no inconsiderable number in those centuries when the great change in belief was passing over the Roman world, but this does not now demand serious consideration. Other reasons, however, for supposing that the adoption of Christianity contributed to the ruin of the Empire have been advanced which merit a more grave attention.

It has been urged with considerable truth that in the old world the worship of local deities inspired the dwellers in the city and country where these deities were the especial object of adoration with an intense spirit of patriotism. The deities were identified with the city and country, and noble deeds of devotion and self-sacrifice were performed in the service of the god under whose protecting care the city or country flourished; all this patriotic sentiment was weakened, perhaps extinguished, by Christianity, which swept away all local objects of adoration, substituting in their place One God who loved all peoples, cities, and countries with the same pitying but changeless love. Thus, it is said, Christianity

* Lecky: *European Morals*, chap. iii., pp. 412–419, 441.

destroyed the patriotic heroism which would, under the old state of things, have defended the Empire against the barbarian invaders. But the truth is that this ancient feeling of patriotism had been extinguished long before Christianity was adopted as the religion of the Empire. Already in Rome strange deities, such as Mithras and Serapis, had largely taken the place of the old national objects of worship—foreign gods whose worship could inspire no special patriotic feeling; and the same change had passed over the provincial centres. The mischief, if it were a mischief, dates long before the years of the fourth century, when Christianity was beginning to be generally accepted.

Other and very different causes precipitated the ruin of the mighty Empire, a ruin which, although coincident with the victory of Christianity, was in no way connected with its adoption. These causes had been long at work, for the Empire, both morally and politically, had been for many years in a condition of manifest decline. *Within*, may be noted in this connection the increase of the slave population and the consequent grave deterioration of morals, the growth of luxury, the gradual decrease of population, the ever augmenting taxation, which reached its culminating point in the last decades of the third century under Diocletian, when the condition of the people under the enormous fiscal burdens they were called upon to bear became almost intolerable. *Without*, the presence of the barbarian nations* on all the frontiers of the Empire, a pressure which the enfeebled provinces each succeeding year were less able to resist. But all these things were of older date than the fourth and fifth centuries, and none of them can be referred to Christianity; they made up an evil heritage upon which the Christianised Empire entered, but the state of things was emphatically not one for which it was in any way responsible.

We have, however, to face the fact that on the morrow,

* The enormous and seemingly sudden increase in the numbers of these barbarian peoples in the third and following centuries on all sides of the Empire is a problem which has never yet been exhaustively discussed, and remains, indeed something of a mystery to the historian.

so to speak, of the cessation of persecution of the Church, quickly followed by the recognition and acceptance of Christianity as the religion of the Roman world, the Empire fell to pieces; Christianity proving powerless to stave off, or even for a single hour to delay, the utter ruin. Nor does it seem in any appreciable degree, after its almost general adoption, to have succeeded in transforming the Pagan society, or in making it more capable of resisting the formidable hordes of invaders. In the century which followed the conversion of Constantine and the Edict of Milan, society in all its grades continued as hopelessly corrupt as before; nor was any strenuous effort made to ward off the utter ruin which eventually overtook the Roman civilisation. In the course of this sorrowful century a group of singularly able and earnest Christian teachers and writers arose, such as Ambrose and Augustine, Jerome and Chrysostom, Orosius and Salvian, who tell us without disguise what was the feeling of the Church, and admirably voice the hopes, the fears, and outlooks of the more serious Christians of their day and time. There is no doubt that they were at first grievously disappointed with the results of the conversion of the Roman world. Their sad words have been well described as a long cry of grief; they felt themselves swallowed up by Pagan corruption. "Civil society, like religious society, appeared Christian. The Sovereigns and the immense majority of the people had embraced Christianity, but, at bottom, civil society was Pagan, it retained the institutions, the laws, and the manners of Paganism. It was a society which Paganism and not Christianity had made."* And yet for that society the Church felt itself in some degree responsible.

Besides this there were various other causes at work which account for the Church's early failure to transform this vast Roman society which had adopted its religion.

We may touch upon certain of the more obvious of these. (*a*) When all, or well-nigh all, were Christians, or at least nominally Christians, the influence of the Church on the life of the individual, or on the life of society in general, was

* Guizot: *Hist. de la Civilisation en France*, Lect. II.

enormously reduced. The comparatively little body of really earnest believers was lost in the great multitude of professed Christians, very many of whom remained semi-Pagans at heart. This so-called Christian society was exposed to all the temptations sanctioned by the Paganism of the Empire, of which the gladiatorial games are a prominent example. These games, almost inconceivable in their atrocity, were the favourite, even the habitual, amusement of the society of the Empire; and the arrangements for their performance, eclipsing every other monument of Imperial magnificence, are still among the most imposing relics of old Rome. We must remember when we speak or write of these horrible spectacles, that the main diversion of all classes of the people was the spectacle of bloodshed; of the death, sometimes of the torture, not only of animals but of human beings. The ghastly fascination and the inhuman influence of these games of the amphitheatre "pervaded the whole texture of Roman life, they became the commonplace of conversation, the very children imitated them in their play, the philosophers drew from them their metaphors and illustrations. The artists portrayed them in every variety of ornament."* As late as the closing years of the fourth century we read of the Prefect Symmachus, who was regarded as one of the most estimable of the lovers of the old *régime*, collecting some Saxon prisoners to fight in honour of his son. They strangled themselves in prison, and Symmachus mourned over the misfortune that had befallen him from their impious hands.† A few years later even S. Augustine relates how one of his friends, being attracted to the Amphitheatre, endeavoured by shutting his eyes to guard against a horrible fascination which he knew to be sinful. A sudden scream caused him to open them, and he never could withdraw his gaze again.‡

(*b*) Another cause of the seeming powerlessness of the

* Lecky: *European Morals*. His picture of the popular amusements at this period, and their effect on the lives of the people, is very vivid. See Vol. I., chap. xi., pp. 287–305, and see, too, Boissier: *La fin du Paganisme*, livre v., chap. xi.

† Symmachus: *Epist.* 11, 46.

‡ S. Aug.: *Confess.* vi. 8.

Church to regenerate or even materially to influence society in the Roman Empire in the fourth century must be sought in the fatal schism which appeared in her communities in the first years which followed her victory. It was a schism which threatened her very existence, and affected to an almost incalculable extent her influence for good. Arianism, with its subtle suggestions casting doubt on the supreme divinity of the blessed Founder of the religion, sapped the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and with its appeals to unassisted human reason, rapidly obtained a wide, though a comparatively short-lived, popularity. Strangely enough this Arianism found allies, all powerful for a season, on the Imperial throne. The great Constantine gave ear to its teachers. Matters were even worse under his successors. "The Emperor Constantius (A.D. 337–361) put himself at the head of the Arians, and cruelly persecuted the Catholics. . . . . Valens, Emperor of the East, an Arian, like Constantius, was a still more violent persecutor."*

S. Jerome, writing at the close of the fourth century, uses the following strong expression on the subject of the wide prevalence of this heresy: "The whole world groaned, and was astonished to find itself Arian."†

It is true that the "whole world," to use Jerome's somewhat rhetorical expression, in after years woke up from its feverish dream, and the Catholic faith regained its empire over the hearts of the large majority of Christian believers, while Arianism was gradually relegated to the position of a sect, which, as time passed on, became ever less and less influential. But long before the Catholic doctrine had recovered its supremacy in the Church, the great change had passed over the Roman world, and the Empire had virtually ceased to exist. Among the causes which marred the Church's influence in the early days of its adoption as the religion of the Empire the widespread Arian heresy holds a conspicuous place.

* Bossuet: *Cinquième Advertissement aux Protestants*, C. 18.

† S. Jerome: *Dial. adv. Luc.*, c. xix. "Ingemuit totus orbis, et Arianum miratus est se esse."

(*c*) With somewhat greater caution may be adduced another probable cause for the Church's impotence in the matter of the renovation of the corrupt and dissolute Pagan society of the fourth century.

Judging from the clear and definite pictures painted by the popular Christian poet Prudentius, the poems and writings of Paulinus of Nola, and the ideals they exhibit, the side lights thrown on the life of the Church by Pope Damasus of Rome,* the stern reproaches of Vigilantius, the grave warnings of Augustine—the Church of the days which immediately followed the Peace established by Constantine, the Church of the fourth century, was curiously weakened with strange superstitions. The cult of the martyrs had introduced into the popular belief elements quite unknown to the professors of the Faith in the first days, elements utterly foreign to the primitive teaching of the Gospel. Such novelties in matters of belief and practice no doubt grievously detracted from the *spiritual* power of the Church. How deeply these grave errors had sapped the life of Christianity at that time is hard to measure, but that such teaching was widespread and popular is almost certain.

(3) The startling rapidity with which, at the close of the fourth and during the first half of the fifth century, the floods of barbarian invasion, one quickly following on the other, overwhelmed all the fairest and richest provinces of the Roman Empire, came as a terrible surprise upon all sorts and conditions of men. Generally speaking, the resistance of the Imperial forces was feeble, half-hearted, and ill-directed; only one conspicuous example of a great commander can be with certainty quoted as having arisen in that period of tremendous disaster. Stilicho's campaign against Radagaisus, which resulted in the hordes of that famous barbarian chieftain being forced to retire from Italy, stands out in bold relief among the countless disasters which terminated in the

* All these various pieces of testimony, belonging to the second half of the fourth and the earlier years of the fifth century, have been dwelt upon at some length in the preceding chapter.

total ruin of the Western and more important division of the Roman Empire.* The following rough table of some of the principal invasions and their dates will show at a glance what befel the hapless Roman world in these sad years :—

Circa A.D.	
396	Alaric's invasion of Greece and Southern Europe.
400-3	„ „ of Italy.
406	Radagaisus invades Italy (but is defeated by Stilicho).
	„ „ Gaul.
408	Alaric and his Goths in Italy ; first siege of Rome.
409	Second siege of Rome.
410	Alaric takes and sacks Rome and ravages Italy.
412	Adolphus, King of the Goths, overruns and seizes Gaul.
409	The Suevi, Vandals, and Alans invade Spain.
415-8	The Goths invade and conquer Spain.
430-9	Genseric and the Vandals overrun and conquer North Africa.
450-3	Attila and the Huns overrun Italy and Gaul.

At the close of the fourth and in the early years of the fifth century the more thoughtful of the Roman people, strange to say, were still apparently unconscious of the utter ruin which menaced the Empire and the whole fabric of Roman society. Clouds of barbarians not only menaced the frontiers, but had already invaded many of the provinces, had even penetrated into Italy, and had been seen at the gates of Rome. Yet in spite of these ominous warnings, men still believed in the majesty of the immemorial city, and were persuaded that the hordes of invaders would be rolled back from her gates, and that the formidable invasions were but transient calamities. The victories of Stilicho over Alaric, and more conspicuously over Radagaisus, were hymned in exultant language by the Christian poet Paulinus of Nola and by the Pagan song-man Claudian. Claudian especially voiced public opinion when he sung of the Roman power as of something which recognised no terms, no limit, and pointed to the barbarian armies fleeing before Stilicho as a striking object-lesson for the invaders. †

* The resistance of Ætius to Attila and the Huns was not until the middle of the fifth century, when all was already lost. The forces, too, of Ætius were mainly composed of Goths and Franks.

† "Discite vesanae Romam non temnere gentes."—Claudian: *De bello Get.*, 647.

But all these dreams of safety were rudely dissipated by the fall and sack of Rome in A.D. 410, when Alaric and his Goths for ever dissipated the illusion of the inviolability of the Eternal City.

The effect produced throughout the Roman world by the fall of Rome in A.D. 410 was terrible and far-reaching. No succession of invasions of the provinces, no lengthened occupation of a country by a barbarian horde, struck home as did the news of the sack of the Imperial city, so long the centre of Roman civilisation. Augustine tells us how "the whole world, even in the Far East, shuddered at the dread tidings."* Jerome, in his Bethlehem retreat, wrote that the torch of the world was extinguished.†

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in the earlier years of the fifth century, was the greatest figure in Christianity since the days of the Apostles; no teacher had enjoyed so wide, so general an authority. His greatest literary work on the "City of God" was begun in the year 413. Its primary object, and especially its earlier part, was devoted to questions connected with the great catastrophe of A.D. 410, and was a well-reasoned answer to the plaint of the Pagan party in the Empire, that the disasters which had befallen Rome were owing to the Christians and their lately acquired supremacy in the Empire. Augustine argued that instead of the Christians being responsible for the calamity which had happened to the great city all would have been lost had it not been for Alaric's friendship for Christianity; as it was, the churches of Rome, and those who sought sanctuary within their walls, were spared, among those who were thus preserved being many Pagans.

Through this important work of the Christian master, the composition of which occupied some thirteen years, a strange vein of optimism as regards the political situation runs. Bad though things seemed, Augustine could not bring himself to believe that all was lost. "The Empire is sorely tried, rather than completely changed; do not let us despair

* Aug.: *Sermo de urbis excidio.*

† Jerome: *Commentat. in Ezech. prol.*

of resurrection, for who knows here what is the will of God."*

The thoughts and feelings of some at least of the more responsible leaders of Catholic Christianity in this anxious period of stress and storm, included roughly in the second and third decades of the fifth century, are expressed in the well-known "Universal History" of Orosius. This composition may in certain aspects be regarded as a sequel to the "City of God" of Augustine.

Paul Orosius,† a Spaniard by birth, was the disciple and friend of the great Augustine; the same optimistic view of the political situation noticed in "The City of God" runs through the writings of the younger scholar, perhaps even exaggerated. In reality the period when Orosius was writing was one of the saddest the world has ever known; but Orosius viewed the terrible barbarian inroads as a severe trial rather than as the total ruin of the Empire. A sadder and more faithful view of the desperate situation and of the cruel sufferings to which the hapless population of well-nigh all the Western and more important provinces were subjected is, however, given in two anonymous poems ‡ belonging to the same period which have come down to us. These represent the Empire as utterly ruined, the aspect of cities and country being completely changed, the sword, fire, and hunger having passed over them. The human race is represented as perishing, war is everywhere. The end of all things is at hand. "Ultima quæque vides." "Ultima pertulimus!" Another contemporary poem containing a vivid picture of the bitter

* *De Civ. Dei*, iv. 7, "Romanum imperium afflictum est potius quam mutatum."

† His great work, "The Universal History," was much read throughout the middle ages; King Alfred translated and somewhat abridged it. It was largely studied as late as in the sixteenth century, in which age as many as twenty-six editions were published.

‡ These anonymous poems are entitled *Ad Uxorem* and *De Providentiâ*; they will be found in *Migne*, among the works of S. Prosper, to whom they once were wrongly attributed. They are referred to at some length by Boissier, *Le fin du Paganisme*, vol. ii. To these two pieces may be added the *Commonitorium* of S. Orientius, composed somewhat later, probably early in the fifth century.

sufferings endured by the great Gallic proprietors has also been preserved. Paulinus of Pella, a rich and noble provincial connected with some of the great houses of the hapless Empire, lived to see his sumptuous villas burned, his wife and children slain, and in his old age found himself poor and solitary, a little farm quite insufficient for his support being the only relic of his vast estates.

A few years later than Orosius, the weighty and important writings of Salvian give us a lurid picture of the state of the dying Empire about the year 450 or somewhat later. The optimism of the "City of God," and of Orosius' "Universal History," has disappeared in the lengthy and exhaustive treatise "On the Government of God," by Salvian. Events had indeed moved quickly in the twenty years which followed the date of Augustine's death in the year 430; there was no longer any room for hope. Gaul, Spain, Africa, most of Italy, were occupied by barbarian invaders, who had come to stay in those vast, fair provinces, not simply to raid and to harry them. Salvian* recognises the fact that the grand Empire was indeed dying, if it were not already dead. It is no longer to Pagans that his arguments are addressed. Pagans had in effect disappeared from the scene, and the great majority of the world of Rome, outwardly at least, was professedly Christian. Many of the more thoughtful were asking how it came about that the Empire, now a vast Christian community, was so manifestly the object of the Divine wrath. Salvian replies to the agonised enquiry by drawing a picture of the Roman of the dying Empire, and the barbarian raider whom God was using so manifestly as His instrument of punishment.

In his vivid portraiture of the so-called "Christian" Romans, Salvian paints a society living in conditions of awful depravity and degradation rarely surpassed. He spares no class, no

* Of Salvian's private life but little is known. He and his wife voluntarily chose the life of ascetics. He was evidently a person of the highest culture. He spent several years in the Monastery of Lerins, an island near Toulon, a great home of learning and devoted piety. His great work on "The Government of God," above referred to, was composed *circa* A.D. 450, or a few years later; he spent the later years of his life at Marseilles.

order. The merchants and traders are fraudulent and dishonourable, the public functionaries hopelessly corrupt and venal, the legionaries of the Empire faithless and robbers; the clergy, if possible, worse than the laity, being unjust, greedy, immoral; the ecclesiastic had changed his dress not his life. The Roman society, so sorely tried in that fatal age, Salvian paints as a sink of iniquity; and though he may have overdrawn his gloomy picture, there is little doubt that it was on the whole evil and corrupt. We learn this much at least from other contemporary authorities; men who wrote from very different standpoints, such as Ammianus Marcellinus and, a few years later, Jerome and Chrysostom.

The barbarian invader in Salvian's eyes was, on the whole, a nobler being than the degenerate Roman Christian; cruel he was undoubtedly, a robber and ignorant; but his vices were practised by the Roman Christians;* in some respects the morals of the stranger nations were purer. We read of the Vandal conqueror, Genseric, for instance, after the fall of Carthage purging the city of its haunts of vice. Those of them who professed Christianity were no doubt tainted with the heresy of Arius; but this was the result of no deliberate choice on their part. It was from Arians they had derived their knowledge of the religion of Jesus.

The sum of Salvian's argument undoubtedly is that the rough, often untutored barbarian was more worthy to be the master of the world than the degenerate Roman, Christian though he professed to be.† In our day even Montalembert, the fervid Roman Catholic scholar, has strongly endorsed the conclusions of Salvian, when in his *Monks of the West* (Book I.) he describes the Roman Empire without the barbarians as "an abyss of servitude and corruption."

Amidst all this chaos of misery into which the once

* "Injusti sunt barbari, et nos hoc sumus," Salvian, iv., 14, 65. This late-Latin expression is reproduced in the well-known French idiom, "nous *le* sommes."

† "Their modesty purifies the earth all stained by Roman debauchery."—Salvian, v. 2 and vii. 6.

S. Aug. had already, *De Civ. Dei*, 1–4 and 7, dwelt upon the forbearance of the soldiers of Alaric (the Goth) before the tombs of the martyrs, and he speaks of the "misericordia et humilitas" of these fierce conquerors.

mighty Empire was plunged we catch sight of the presence of a great Church—great in spite of the disorders referred to by Salvian in his burning rhetoric, perhaps with some exaggeration in his details—which, amid all the terrors of the barbaric conquest, amid deep-seated corruption and unspeakable misery, still taught to Roman and to barbarian alike a pure morality and a lofty ideal, enforcing its teaching by the strongest motives of action. This Church was everywhere, in the camps of the invader, in the captured cities, in the desolated country, controlling, strengthening, comforting, or over-awing with its great traditions and splendid history; strongly organised, drawing to its side the best and noblest spirits among the conquerors and the conquered; possessing in its ranks some of the greatest leaders and teachers who have in the long story of Christian progress ever adorned the ranks of the believers in Jesus with their virtue and self-denial, their wisdom and learning.

Among these were Martin of Tours, the more prominent members of the monastic House of Lerins, such men as Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome, Damasus and Athanasius, Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, with others, their friends, and fellow-workers; some known, more whose names have not been handed down, guides of the Church in those dark and perilous times. Naturally their wishes, and for a time their hopes, were bound up with the fortunes of the Empire. We see from the writings of Augustine and Orosius they trusted that things would in the end go right with the immemorial domination of Rome; and it was with deep sorrow they witnessed the rapid decadence of the Empire. But, although the Church naturally grieved over the ruin of the old state of things and mourned the dissolution of the old society, she never threw in her lot with the falling Empire, but gradually separated her cause from the old vanquished Rome, feeling that her work would endure even though Rome perished. So when, recognising that all was over, she turned to the new conquering nations with her divine story, her hopes, and her promises—saving from the wreck of the old world and the old civilisation all that was

possible to preserve, and standing between the Romans and the barbarians, somewhat in the position of a neutral power—she obtained with the conquerors a mighty influence which was used for the benefit of the conquered.

SECTION II.—THE MONASTIC DEVELOPMENT.

SALVIAN, in his picture of Roman society, spared no class, no calling; even the clergy, whom at first he excepted from his denunciations, he included later in his general summary of those who shared in the almost universal laxity of conduct.

It could hardly have been otherwise, when it is remembered that a large portion of the society of the Empire in the second half of the fourth century was Christian only in name, while in heart and mind it remained Pagan.

There were, however, many earnest and devout followers of Jesus amidst the thoughtless masses who made up the population of the Empire, who clearly recognised the grave peril, and felt that something must be done lest Christianity should be swamped—lost in the crowd of heedless professors of the beautiful creed which had inspired the comparatively small company of believers in the centuries of persecution.

It was out of this urgent need that *monasticism* arose. The great Chrysostom, writing *circa* A.D. 376, defends and extols the monastic spirit which was then beginning to be a great power in the Church. It has many powerful adversaries, but he speaks of it as "the true philosophy."* He considers that monasticism, in the confused state of things which existed in the last quarter of the fourth century, was the one resource and hope of Christianity, and all through his brilliant, chequered career, the great theologian, preacher, and thought-leader continued to defend and extol the new monastic institutions. And with him, in his estimate of monasticism, with scarcely an exception, went all the group of eminent men who at that hour of extreme peril, when the

* The treatise containing the famous apology of Chrysostom, written *circa* A.D. 376, is termed *Adversus Oppugnatores Vitæ Monasticæ*, and is divided into three books.

very foundations of the old society were being uprooted, kept the lamp of Christianity brightly burning; whose words and writings during the fifteen centuries which have elapsed since they fell asleep, have been the treasure house, the arsenal of her theology. In the Eastern churches, men such as Athanasius and Chrysostom, Basil, and Gregory of Nazianzen; in the Western churches, Martin of Tours, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine; and a few years later, Vincent of Lerins and Cæsarius of Arles, with one voice, in their teaching and by their example not only defended the novel institution of monasticism, but pointed to it as an organisation absolutely necessary to the Church and to Christendom.

It appeared first in the East in the last years of the third and the early years of the fourth century. Amid the deserts of Egypt we mark its first real beginnings. Some of the victims of the bitter persecution of Diocletian sought there a refuge from the cruelty of the Government, but as Bossuet well says, "The persecution made fewer solitaries than the peace and the triumph of the Church." The name of Anthony, who died in A.D. 356, is deservedly celebrated as the father and head of the solitaries of the Thebaid, whom he transformed into Cœnobites.* A contemporary of Anthony was Pachomius, who died in A.D. 348. He gave to the Cœnobites of Anthony a written rule, traditionally given to him by an angel. This Pachomius founded upon the Nile at Tabenne, an island a little above the first cataract in the Thebaid, the first monastery properly so-called—or rather a congregation of eight monasteries, containing, it is said, many thousand monks. Rapidly the two Thebaids of the Egyptian deserts were peopled with monks. The houses of nuns or female solitaries at this same period in number were nearly equal to the monasteries. The numbers given are simply enormous,†

* The derivations of the terms used to designate the new order of monastics are as follows:—Cœnobites *κοινὸς* (common), and *βίος* (life), ascetics *ἄσκησις* (exercise), anchorites *ἀναχωρέω* (to put oneself apart, to withdraw), monk, monastery *μόνος* (alone, solitary), abbat (abbot), the Syriac abba (father).

† Rufinus, *Hist. Mon.*, xi. 5, mentions, for instance, that as early as A.D. 356, at Oxyrinchus, on the Nile, were as many as ten thousand monks and twenty thousand virgins.

but are probably exaggerated. Each of these early religious houses was a school of labour, the inmates numbering in their ranks weavers, curriers, carpenters, etc. At Tabenne there was a special school of scholars. Under the rule of Pachomius every monk was required to be able to read and write. Not a few profound theologians and teachers were trained in these houses of prayer and solitude. An almost perpetual fast was rigorously required from the many inmates of the religious houses. From Egypt, before the end of the fourth century, this strange, novel stream of monastic life overflowed into Arabia, Syria, and Palestine, and even further east into Mesopotamia, where we hear of it from the writings of Ephrem of Edessa.

In the West it was almost an unknown feature in Church life until *circa* A.D. 340, when Athanasius, driven from his home in Alexandria by the Arians, came to Rome. This eminent and far-sighted Church leader at once used his great influence to introduce into Rome and Italy the new phase of Church life which had so rapidly and powerfully moved Egypt. Somewhat later he issued his life of Anthony, the great Egyptian monk; and this work, published under the name and authority of the greatest of the Catholic theologians, quickly acquired a wide popularity throughout the West. The story of Egyptian monasticism, told with all the winning power of the great Master, came as a revelation to the Church of the West,* which was languishing and fading under the conditions

* There is in one of the charméd passages of the *Confessions* of Augustine a chance reference to this "Life of Anthony the Monk" by Athanasius, which undesignedly tells us into what centres it had penetrated, how widely it was circulated, how powerful was its influence. Augustine was at Milan lecturing upon eloquence. One day he received a visit from one of his African countrymen, named Potitianus, a military officer of high rank on the staff of the Emperor. "We seated ourselves," said Augustine, "to talk, when he happened to notice a book which lay on the table before us. He opened it; it was 'The Apostle Paul.' I confessed to him that reading it was my principal study. He was then led in the course of conversation to speak to us of Anthony, the monk of Egypt, whose name so glorious among Thy servants was unknown to us. He perceived this, and confining himself to that subject he revealed the great man to our ignorance, which astonished him much; and we were lost in admiration when we heard of these marvels so recent, almost contemporary, which were worked in the Catholic Church. . . . From them his conversation turned upon the holy flocks of the

we have been sketching. The new organisation at once breathed a fresh life into the Roman and Italian churches, giving them power to adapt themselves to the changed world now rapidly growing up round them. With extraordinary rapidity monas-

monasteries, and the perfumes of virtue which went up from them towards their Lord . . . of which we knew nothing. Even at Milan there was a cloister full of Brothers trained under the wing of Ambrose, at that time Bishop of Milan, and we knew nothing of it." Then the soldier told Augustine how he came first to hear of Anthony and the new life of monasteries. "He was in garrison at Trèves on duty at the Imperial Palace; the Emperor was spending the afternoon at the spectacles of the Circus; he and three of his brother officers went to walk in the gardens laid out close to the walls of the City, and as they walked two and two, one with him and the two others together, they separated. The two latter entered a cottage on the way, where lived some of those voluntary poor who are Thy servants, and there they found *a manuscript of the Life of Anthony*. One of them began to read it, he admired it, his heart burned, and as he read the thought rose up: should he embrace such a life and leave the warfare of the age to serve Thee? [They were both in the service of the Emperor.] Suddenly he was filled with a divine love and holy shame . . . and casting his eyes on his friend he said: 'Tell me, I pray thee, whither all our labours tend? What is it we seek? For whom do we carry arms? What can be our greatest hope in this palace but to be friends with the Emperor? And how frail is that fortune! What perils, and how many perils before reaching the greatest peril! Besides, when shall that be attained? But if I desire to be a friend of God I am so, and instantly.' He spoke thus, all shaken by the birth of his new life, and then his eyes returning to the holy pages (of the Life of Anthony the monk) he read: His heart changed in Thy sight . . . he read on, and the waves of his soul flowed, trembling . . . he was already Thine, when he said from his soul, 'It is done, I break with all our hope, I will serve God, and now in this place I begin the work, if thou wilt not follow me deter me not.' The other answered that he also would win his share of glory and spoil. . . . Potitianus and his companion, after having walked in another part of the garden, reached their retreat, seeking their two companions, and told them it was time to go back because the day fell. But they, declaring their design, told how their resolution had come to them and had established itself in their minds; they entreated their friends not to oppose their determination even if they refused to share it . . . they piously congratulated their comrades and returned to the palace." Both these officers, Augustine tells us, had betrothed brides, who, hearing this, consecrated to Him their virginity. Then Augustine, in the vivid page of his *Confessions*, relates the effect produced upon him by Potitianus' story. "I was penetrated with shame and confusion while Potitianus spoke. . . . I seized Alypius (his dear friend and companion) and cried out: "What, then, are *we* doing? How is this? . . . These ignorant men rise; they take heaven by force, and *we* with our heartless sciences, behold we are wallowing in the flesh" (S. Aug.: *Confessions*, Book VIII., Chaps. VI.–XII.). The sequel of this strange moving scene is well known. Augustine renounced his career and the world, and became the leading spirit of the Church of his day, the greatest teacher of the period in which he lived; in some respects, after the Apostles, who had heard the Master's voice, the most influential teacher of all the Christian ages.

teries for both sexes were founded in Rome and in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital; from Rome the new institution spread all over Italy. It was fostered, as we have remarked, by well-nigh all the leading spirits of the Church in the second half of the fourth and early years of the fifth century; it was especially favoured in Gaul under the all-powerful influence of Martin, Bishop of Tours. Sulpicius Severus, his devoted friend and disciple, tells us how some two thousand monks gathered round the grave of the great Gallic Bishop and teacher when he passed away in A.D. 397. Another of the leading Latin Bishops, the saintly Ambrose of Milan, who died in the same year, 397, was one of the warm supporters of the movement. But among the Latin fathers of that age, so prolific in eminent scholars and writers, perhaps the most ardent believer in the new departure was Jerome; who by his writings and his example did, perhaps, more than any of his illustrious contemporaries to advance and popularise this new phase of Christianity.

Under Augustine, who after his conversion (alluded to in the note above) became subsequently Bishop of Hippo and the most influential leader and adviser in the churches of the West, numerous monasteries for both sexes multiplied in the North African provinces. It was Augustine who, in the year 423, drew up the famous monastic rule which bears his name. This "Rule," originally compiled for a monastery of women in Hippo of which his sister was Superior, subsequently became the fundamental code of an immense branch of the monastic order which for many centuries has borne the honoured name of Augustine.

The new organisation came into existence in the West about the middle of the fourth century; in the East, as we have seen, it arose a few years earlier. It grew out of the necessity of the time, and was approved and shared in by the large majority of the noblest professors of Christianity. We must not, however, in our warm appreciation of the great services rendered by monasticism to the Church, and indeed to all society, shrink from confessing that dark shadows in many cases were not wanting in the pictures we have been

sketching. Disorder and various abuses rapidly crept in; the monastic life was sometimes chosen as a pretext for idleness, as a cloak under which life's ordinary duties might be evaded. But these errors and flaws were recognised at a very early period and sternly denounced by the eminent Church leaders and teachers who so earnestly promoted the system and advocated its general adoption as the most effective means of breathing fresh life into the Christian communities. We find these stern reproofs, these earnest warnings, notably in the writings of Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine. Jerome, indeed, denounced with boldness and energy all such idle monks, and pointed out with scathing severity the faults and dangers of the monastic institution. Augustine is not behindhand in his grave reproofs and pointed warnings, when he dwells with an eloquence peculiarly his own on the high motives of that *law of labour* which has ever remained the glory and strength of monasticism.*

Too much stress has been laid by certain writers upon some of the forms of life adopted in the first great outbreak of asceticism, especially in the East, where there were many eccentric examples of what may be fairly termed a terrible self-abnegation; the instances of Simeon Stylites and his imitators, with their life-long awful penances and ghastly self-tortures, are often quoted. Yet these, after all, were exceptions, and such examples found comparatively few imitators in the West. Nay, even the unnatural life-work of these earnest though mistaken enthusiasts was not thrown away. "Imperfect and distorted as was the ideal of the anchorites, deeply, too, as it was perverted by the admixture of spiritual selfishness, still the example . . . was not wholly lost upon the world. . . . The very eccentricities of their lives, their uncouth forms, their horrible penances, won the admiration of rude men. . . . Multitudes of barbarians were converted to Christianity at the sight of S. Simeon Stylites."†

* Augustine, *De Opere Monachorum*, Cap. C. 28.

† The words quoted are Mr. Lecky's, *History of European Morals*, chap. iv. In spite of his usual conspicuous fairness, Mr. Lecky generally underrates monasticism and fails to give it the place it emphatically possesses in the story of Christianity; hence the importance of the above conclusion

Even in its earliest days the monastic development of Christianity was far from being opposed or even indifferent to learning. We have dwelt above on the comparative fewness of the ascetics, such as Simeon Stylites, whose extreme austerities necessarily separated them entirely from ordinary human life, its possibilities and its thoughts; and we have justly judged their ideals as something extravagant and excessive, although not without their influence upon the dissolute and thoughtless world of those days and times. Ordinary monastic life, however, even in the East, included, as part of its invariable rule, useful work of varied kinds. Each monastery was a great school of labour; and to simply manual labour the monks united the culture of the mind, and especially the study of sacred literature. It was from among their ranks that the most learned and successful adversaries of the greatest and most dangerous heresy that has ever appeared were drawn. The monk, as a rule, was the deadly foe of Arianism. Augustine, in his *De Opere Monachorum*, dwells upon the regular work of the monastics, who divided their day between manual labour, reading, and prayer.

In the first half of the fifth century, to take well known and conspicuous examples, the famous houses of Lerins,* of S. Victor of Marseilles, and scarcely later, of Condat in the Jura, were famous far and wide as houses of great learning, as well as seminaries of instruction, where their inmates led the austere and saintly life which monasticism pressed upon those who voluntarily took on them its obligations and duties, and at the same time pursued their various studies.

* Lerins was a little island in the roadstead of the modern Toulon. The religious house was founded *circa* A.D. 410, and speedily became a great and celebrated school, not merely of theology but of general literature. In this monastery many of the most illustrious bishops and teachers in the fifth century received heir training; with it the names of Salvian and Vincent of Lerins, the first controversialist of his age, are closely connected. The *Commonitorium* of Vincent the Monk of Lerins has been read and studied for more than fourteen centuries. The monastery of S. Victor at Marseilles rivalled Lerins in importance. It contained, it is said, as many as 5,000 monks, and was a famous theological seminary all through the fifth century. Condat, in the Jura, was another of these very early monastic homes of learning—learning by no means confined to theology. It became one of the most renowned seminaries of the East Gallic province.

Before the close of the fifth century this new departure in Christian life and work, which commenced a very few years after the peace of the Church and the general adoption of Christianity by the Empire in the first half of the fourth century, had permeated the whole life of the Christian communities. Very large indeed was the number of monastics in the various provinces now completely under the power of the barbarian invaders. The great need, however, in the new organisation was for some acknowledged discipline and order.

In the *East* the rule of S. Basil was largely acknowledged, but many diversities prevailed. In the *West* the want of a recognised order was even more marked. This lack of an established rule was supplied through the energy of a remarkable man who appeared in Italy at this juncture, Benedict, whose life dates from A.D. 480 to A.D. 543. This Benedict succeeded in impressing his views of discipline and order upon a number of the Italian monastic houses, and gradually his "Rule" was accepted by the majority at least of Western monasteries.

Under the new conditions of order and discipline devised by him, monasticism continued to grow in numbers and influence, rendering to the human race during the long drawn out period of stress and storm which followed, services which can scarcely be overstated.

Looking back from the vantage ground of the experience of many centuries, we are in a position fairly to weigh these services which the monastics have rendered to civilisation. Here one voice proceeds from the cool judgment of the philosophic essayist, and from the somewhat passionate enthusiasm of the Roman Catholic historian; the one not unbiassed by an aversion to the system, the other influenced by his admiration for the mysticism which more or less colours the works and days of all monasticism.

These services can only be characterised as immense, and as continuing during a long period of well-nigh universal desolation and confusion stretching over some six or seven centuries.

The life of a monk, it must be remembered, was an exceptional life; its advocates never taught that it should be the common life of men and women; there was never any idea of transforming the entire universe into a cloister; the conception was that "by the side of the storms and failures of the world there should be a home, a refuge, a school of peace and strength apart from the world. . . . These monks were ever men of prayer and penitence, but they did not limit themselves to prayer and penitence." They busied themselves in the practical work of life besides. In the first place they were pre-eminently *agriculturists*. Not only were the farm lands immediately adjacent to the religious houses admirably cultivated, but vast tracts of country, which owing to the long-continued state of anarchy and confusion had become once more marsh land or forest land, were brought back to a condition of high cultivation.

In every department of agricultural life the monk was distinguished—vineyards, corn lands, pastures, orchards, just to name a few examples, were restored or introduced in all the provinces of the desolated Empire. It is difficult to trace the history of a well-cultivated estate or district to any source save to these cloistered settlers. Nor was their work in *literature*, in its many departments, of less value. We have already alluded to the regulations respecting reading and study, which formed an invariable and important part of the earliest monastic rules in the East and in the West; and when the old life of the Roman Empire had literally "gone under" as the barbarian flood spread over the unhappy provinces, it was in the monasteries alone that the great works of antiquity were preserved. A favourite occupation of the monk was the copying, in a more or less elaborate fashion, the writings of the poets, philosophers, and historians which had charmed the citizens of the great Empire between the days of Augustus and Theodosius.

The care of the monks here, although, perhaps, especially devoted to sacred and ecclesiastical literature, was by no means confined to works of the Christian school, but was

* Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, Book III.

extended over the whole period of classic letters. For centuries, too, the monk was the only teacher* and instructor, and learning of all kinds was exclusively confined to these homes of prayer, so plentifully scattered over the provinces of the barbarian-harassed Empire. The charge of Jerome at the close of the fourth century, "that a monk should always have a book in his hand or under his eyes," † was faithfully observed in a thousand religious houses. From the first, well-nigh every monastery possessed its library, great or small, and as time advanced many of these became famous for the number and value of the volumes they contained.

In the great ruin which in the fifth and following centuries overtook the Empire, it seemed well-nigh certain that, under the rough and destructive barbarian rule, all *art* in its various departments would surely decay and die. Here again, the network of monastic institutions at first preserved the poor remnant of the many-sided artistic crafts, and subsequently developed and even gave them a new colouring.

As early as the first years of the sixth century, Benedict (A.D. 480–543), the great organiser of these houses, in his famous rule provided for artistic work being carried on in his cloister.‡ Very soon the more important religious houses contained, in addition to schools and libraries, studios and workrooms where painting, mosaic work, sculpture, engraving, ivory carving, bookbinding, and the arts of the goldsmith and of the jeweller, were studied and practised.

A great impulse was given to these various art industries by the monk Cassiodorus, the once famous statesman, a contemporary of Benedict. All through the darkest ages of the history of the world, a period covering the sixth and the four following centuries, elaborate and even exquisite works of art

* Schools from the fifth century onward were established in the chief monastic centres, as well as frequently in many of the smaller communities. Alcuin, writing of the monastic school of York at the end of the eighth century, tells us that besides the Holy Scriptures, grammar, rhetoric, jurisprudence, poetry, astronomy, mathematics, etc., were taught there.

† "Nunquam de manu et oculis recedat liber."—*Epist. ad Rustic*, S. Jerome.

‡ "Artifices si sunt in monasterio, cum omni humilitate et reverentiâ faciant ipsas artes, si permiserit abbas."—S. Benedict, C. 57.

were produced in the religious houses of the West, while the stately Romanesque was revived, and subsequently the Gothic, schools of architecture of the Middle Ages were gradually developed in the lonely islands of prayer, whose strange rise we have been sketching in outline.

How successful the monk had been in his unwearied artistic toil in these gloomy centuries of confusion and anarchy is admirably phrased in a gentle though grave rebuke of an eleventh century abbot to his brethren, when he warned them not to be over-attentive to these pursuits lest those higher duties, the peculiar glory of Christianity and the especial duty of the monk, should suffer.

"It matters little that our churches rise to heaven, that the capitals of their pillars are sculptured and gilded, that our parchment is tinted purple, that gold is melted to form the letters of our manuscripts, and that their bindings are set with precious stones, if we have little or no care for the members of Christ, and if Christ himself lies naked and dying before our doors." *

Such is a brief outline of services rendered by monastics to society during a long and terrible period in the history of the world. It seems indeed scarcely probable that the great Christian Doctors of the fourth and fifth centuries, much as they admired and encouraged the monastic spirit, ever dreamed of a future of such a paramount and far-reaching influence for the groups of self-denying solitaries who arose out of the sore needs of the Church, weakened and wounded strangely enough by the very magnitude and suddenness of her decisive victory over Paganism.

The task I set myself is done. How often in the silence of night, under the roof of the old dwelling house of the Deans of Gloucester, the ancient home of the long line of Abbots and Priors of the once famous Benedictine Abbey, in which the foregoing pages have been mostly written, have I fancied that I saw around me the imposing procession of teachers, martyrs,

* "Flores Epitaphii Sanctorum apud Mabillon." Ann. I., lxxi., No. 23 (quoted by Montalembert).

and saints whose life story I have endeavoured to tell. My work has been no panegyric, not even an apologia; the faults and weaknesses which too often scarred the heroic lives of the brave confessors of the Faith have not been slurred over, the divisions and bitter schisms which divided the Christians even in the days of persecution have been faithfully though sorrowfully recorded. It has been a simple, truthful tale—nothing more. But how often, as I read over my narratives of one or other of the stirring or pathetic incidents which make up the wondrous epic of Christian life in the age of persecutions, have I felt that mine was only "a cold and sad pen after all," quite unworthy of the beautiful, difficult task I had set myself. My hope is that my work will please others more than it has succeeded in pleasing the writer—my prayer, that the reader at least may be as intensely persuaded as is the writer, of the awful reality of the stern, long drawn-out conflict between Christianity and Paganism, of the Ever Presence, in the ranks of the Christian combatants, of the Holy Spirit of God and His Christ.

APPENDIX A.

EMPERORS OF ROME.

(CHAPTERS I.–XIII.)

	B.C.
Julius Cæsar, Perpetual Dictator	48
„ „ assassinated	44
Octavianus Cæsar (Augustus)	27

	A.D.
Tiberius	14
Caligula	37
Claudius	41
Nero	54
Galba	68
Otho	69
Vitellius	69
Vespasian...	69
Titus	79
Domitian	81
Nerva	96
Trajan	98
Hadrian	117
Antoninus Pius	138
Marcus Aurelius Antoninus	161
Commodus	180
Pertinax	193
Septimius Severus ...	193
Caracalla and Geta ...	211
Macrinus	217
Elagabalus	218
Alexander Severus ...	222
Maximinus	235
Gordian (and his son) ...	237
Maximus and Balbinus ...	237
Gordian (the younger) ...	238
Philip (the Arabian) ...	244
Decius	249
Gallus	251
Æmilianus	253
Valerian	253
Gallienus (the "Thirty" Pretenders)	260
Claudius II. (Gothicus) ...	268
Aurelian	270
Tacitus	275
Probus	276
Carus	282
Carinus and Numerian ...	283
Diocletian	284

The Associated Emperors under the Constitution of Diocletian.

(chapters xiv.–xvii.)

		A.D.
1st Group of Emperors:	Diocletian—Maximian	286
2nd „ „	Diocletian—Maximian—Galerius—Constantius Chlorus	292
3rd „ „	Galerius—Constantius Chlorus—Severus—Maximin-Daia	305
4th „ „	Galerius—Licinius—Constantine—Maxentius—Maximian—Maximin-Daia	306–7
5th „ „	Constantine—Licinius	312

Constantine (sole Emperor) 323

(*Constantius* on the death of his brothers became sole Emperor.) — Sons and successors of Constantine: Constantine II. (Died 340) ... 337; Constantius ... („ 361.); Constans ... („ 350.)

Julian 361

Jovian 363

A.D.		A.D.
Valens (East) ...	364	Valentinian (West) 364
Theodosius the Great	379	Gratian, Valentinian II. 367

Theodosius the Great (sole Emperor) 392

Arcadius (East) ...	395	Honorius (West)	395
Theodosius II. ...	408	Died 423 (A.D.).	

THE SEE OF ROME.

[*m.* signifies Martyr.]

	A.D.		A.D.
S. Peter and S. Paul (Martyrs) ...	... 67–8	*m.* Sixtus ...	... 119
m. Linus ...	... 67	*m.* Telesphorus ...	... 128
m. Anencletus ...	... 78	Hyginus ...	... 139
m.? Clement ...	... 91	*m.* Pius ...	... 142
m. Evaristus ...	... 100	Anicetus ...	... 157
m. Alexander ...	... 109	*m.* Soterus ...	... 168
		Eleutherus ...	... 176

THE SEE OF ROME—*continued.*

[*m.* signifies Martyr.]

		A.D.
m.	Victor	192
m.?	Zephyrinus	202
m.?	Callistus	219
m.?	Urban	223
m.?	Pontianus	230
m.	Anteros	235
m.	Fabianus	236
m.?	Cornelius	251
m.	Lucius	252
m.	Stephen	253
m.	Sixtus II.	257
	Dionysius	259
m.	Felix...	269
m.	Eutychianus... ...	275
m.?	Gaius	283
m.?	Marcellinus	296
m.?	Marcellus	308
m.?	Eusebius	310
	Miltiades	311
	Silvester	314
	Marcus	336
	Julius	337
	Liberius	352
	Damasus	366
	Siricius ...	384–398

APPENDIX B.

THE PRESENCE OF S. PETER AT ROME.

That S. Peter resided for a considerable time at Rome in his later life, and that he suffered martyrdom there, is now generally allowed by the great majority of scholars, Anglican as well as Roman.

(1) Early patristic testimony can scarcely be understood here to bear any different sense.

a. Clement of Rome, *circa* A.D. 95–6, in his first undoubtedly genuine epistle, makes special mention of Peter and Paul, *and only of Peter and Paul*, who, after enduring many sufferings, endured martyrdom. Clement is writing from the Roman Church to the Corinthians; he is calling attention to examples of devoted Christians who "lived very near to our own times," and without doubt he is appealing to examples which the Church of Rome had themselves witnessed. (Clem., *ad. Cor.*, c. 25.)

b. Ignatius of Antioch, *circa* A.D. 107, writes to the Roman Church :—"I do not command you, like Peter and Paul; they were Apostles, I am a condemned man; they were free, I am a slave until now." Why should Ignatius cite Peter and Paul? Why did he not cite others (for instance, John, writing as he does from the neighbourhood of Ephesus, where John so lately had been the distinguishing personality); had not Peter and Paul been *the Apostles* who, from their residence and authority at Rome, would naturally carry most weight with the Church to which he was writing? (Ign., *ad. Rom.* 4.)

c. Dionysius of Corinth, *circa* A.D. 170, in his letter to the Roman Church, thus writes most definitely :—"So also you by your admonitions (to us) have joined together the plantation of the Romans and Corinthians [a plantation] which was planted by Peter and Paul; for they both came to our city of Corinth and taught us, and in like manner they went together to Italy, and, having taught there, suffered martyrdom about the same time." (Eusebius, *H.E.*, ii. 25.)

d. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, *circa* A.D. 177–90, equally clearly writes :—"Matthew put out also a written gospel among the Hellenes, in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the Church of Rome. And after their departure (by death) Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself also handed down to us in writing the lessons preached by Peter." (Irenæus, *Hær.* iii., i. 1.)

e. Clement of Alexandria, *circa* A.D. 190–200, tells us "when Peter had preached the word publicly in Rome," the hearers of his preaching urged Mark, as having been long his companion, and remembering what he said, to write out his statements. (Eusebius, *H.E.*, vi. 14.)

f. Tertullian of Carthage, *circa* A.D. 200, writes in his treatise, *De Baptismo* 4, thus :—"Nor does it matter whether they are among those whom John baptised in the Jordan, or those whom Peter baptised in the Tiber." And, again, in his *De Præscriptione* 32 :—"The Church of the Romans reports that Clement (of Rome) was ordained by Peter." And yet more positively as to detail in the same *De Præscriptione* 36 :—"If thou art near to Italy thou hast Rome. . . . How happy is that Church on which the Apostles shed all their teaching with their blood, where Peter is conformed to the passion of the Lord."

g. Gaius, the Roman presbyter, *circa* A.D. 200–20, thus claims for the Roman Church the authority of the Apostles Peter and Paul, whose martyred bodies sleep in Rome :—"But I can show you the trophies (the reliques) of the Apostles ; for if thou wilt go to the Vatican or to the Ostian way thou wilt find the trophies of those who founded this Church." (Eusebius, *H.E.*, ii. 25.)

h. Lactantius, *circa* A.D. 306 :—"He disclosed to them all things which Peter and Paul preached at Rome, and their preaching remained in writing for a record," etc. (Lactantius, *Instit. Div.*, iv. 21.)

That Peter perished in the course of the persecution of the Emperor Nero is the universal tradition. His two canonical epistles were, no doubt, written at this period. The first epistle, which was very generally used in the earliest times, was evidently composed in a season of bitter persecution.

The burden of this writing is the consolation and encouragement of some distant communities of Christians under the fiery trial which lay before them. Now, the Neronian persecution was not by any means, we know, confined to Rome. It raged in far-away provinces. The salutation at the close (v. 13) runs thus :—"The (Church that is) at Babylon, elected together with (you) saluteth you." By Babylon the Fathers universally understood Rome ; for it could not be the Egyptian Babylon which was a mere obscure fortress, a place utterly

unknown to Christian history and tradition. It could not have been the well-known Babylon, because, at the time when Peter wrote, that once great city was ruined and deserted, nor is there any vestige of a tradition connecting Babylon with Peter. The vast majority of modern scholars follow the interpretation of the Fathers—as, for instance, Lardner, Alford, Lightfoot, and Farrar; and a famous writer of a very different school, Renan, in his "Antichrist," writes thus of the term Babylon: "*Nom dont la signification symbolique n'échappait à personne.*" These symbolic names are very usual in the Talmud.

But while Peter's residence at Rome during the latter years of his life, and his martyrdom in that great city in the course of the Neronian persecution, are looked upon by well-nigh all schools of thought as historic facts, the tradition of his presence at Rome, and of his teaching there, at an earlier period, is much disputed. Roman Catholic writers, however, appear to have no doubts on the point; and though doctrinal reasons would influence their judgment, still the fair historian cannot fail to see that much can be said in support of their contention. Amongst others, the following arguments in favour of the earlier visit of Peter to Rome, and of his "twenty-five years' episcopate" are urged. It will be seen that some of them at least rest upon historic testimony.

a. The New Testament.—In Acts xii. 1–17 we read how "at this time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword, and, seeing that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also." Then follows the story of the miraculous delivery of the Apostle from prison, and of his decision at once to place himself in safety beyond the jurisdiction of Herod. "He departed," we read, "and went into another place." No mention, indeed, occurs of Rome or of any other city as the goal of his journey. But the constant repetition of the scene of the arrest of Peter by Herod's soldiers on Roman sarcophagi of the fourth century (there are some twenty examples now in the Lateran Museum) show us unmistakably how deeply rooted at Rome was the tradition of the close connection between the Apostle's first coming to Rome and the arrest and the miraculous deliverance from the prison of Herod.

b. Jerome, whose close connection with Damasus—the earnest restorer of so many of the sacred tombs round Rome in the catacombs, who was Pope A.D. 366–384—gave him rare opportunities for accurate investigation, explicitly tells us how Simon Peter came to Rome in the second year of the Emperor Claudius, A.D. 42.

c. We can trace certainly as far back as the fourth century in the

Roman calendars of the Church two feasts in connection with the veneration of the Chairs of S. Peter, the one on January 18th, the other on February 22nd. At the latter of these the chair now at the Vatican was venerated. But what of the other? It seems unmistakably to point to a very early tradition that there was another chair of the Apostle, the object of pilgrimage and veneration.

Recent archæological investigation has revealed to us, almost with certainty, that this "other chair" existed in the very ancient Ostrian cemetery, discovered in the Via Salaria Nova. This chair, evidently a venerable and precious relic, did not, like the well-known one in the Vatican, symbolise Peter's primacy, but it did symbolise his first coming to Rome. Of its existence and preservation in the Ostrian cemetery in the sixth century, we have a remarkable testimony in the papyrus MS. at Monza, which contains a list by Abbot John of "holy oils" collected by him from sacred shrines for the Lombard Queen Theodolinda, *circa* A.D. 590. (These "holy oils" were taken from lamps kept burning in front of celebrated shrines.) The memorandum mentions how he obtained (amongst other reliques) oil from the lamp burning in front of the chair where Peter "first sat" (*prius sedit*) in the Ostrian cemetery in the Via Salaria.*

This cemetery on the Via Salaria Nova has, by recent discoveries, been clearly identified.

d. The testimony of the early Papal lists supports in a very marked way the ancient tradition of the presence of S. Peter at Rome at a period long anterior to the accepted date of A.D. 62.

The Papal list given by Irenæus, *circa* A.D. 170–90 (*contra Hær.*, iii. 3, 3) simply states that the Roman Church was "founded and organised by the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul," and that "those blessed Apostles committed into the hands of Linus the office of the Episcopate." Irenæus then enumerates the Roman succession of bishops from Linus.

* There was evidently a confusion in the minds of the editors of the Martyrologies, from the eighth century downwards, on the point of the "two chairs" of S. Peter, for the 22nd February is marked as the Feast of the "Cathedra S. Peter in Antioch," but De Rossi points out that no ancient document *prior* to the eighth century makes any allusion to *Antioch* in connection with the Feast of February 22nd. The reason of this eighth century emendation is, no doubt, that the scribes who copied the ancient Roman Calendar, finding the 18th January marked as "Cathedra S. Petri quâ primum Romæ sedit," and not understanding why another feast of S. Peter's chair at Rome should be kept on February 22nd, inserted after February 22nd the words "*apud Antiocheium*," to explain what they thought was a difficulty.

In the Eusebian lists* of Roman bishops, S. Peter appears as having presided over the Roman Church in one list for twenty years, in another for twenty-five. In the table of Filocalus, a famous calligrapher best known in connection with the inscriptions set up in the catacombs by Pope Damasus, S. Peter's duration of rule as bishop of the Roman Church is given as twenty-five years. This ancient list of Filocalus (A.D. 354) is usually known as the "Liberian," Pope Liberius' name closing it.

The "twenty-five" years of S. Peter's rule is repeated again in the *Liber Pontificalis*, sometimes, but mistakenly, called "The Lives of the Pontiffs," which, although originally dating from the beginning of the sixth century, is probably based largely on older materials.

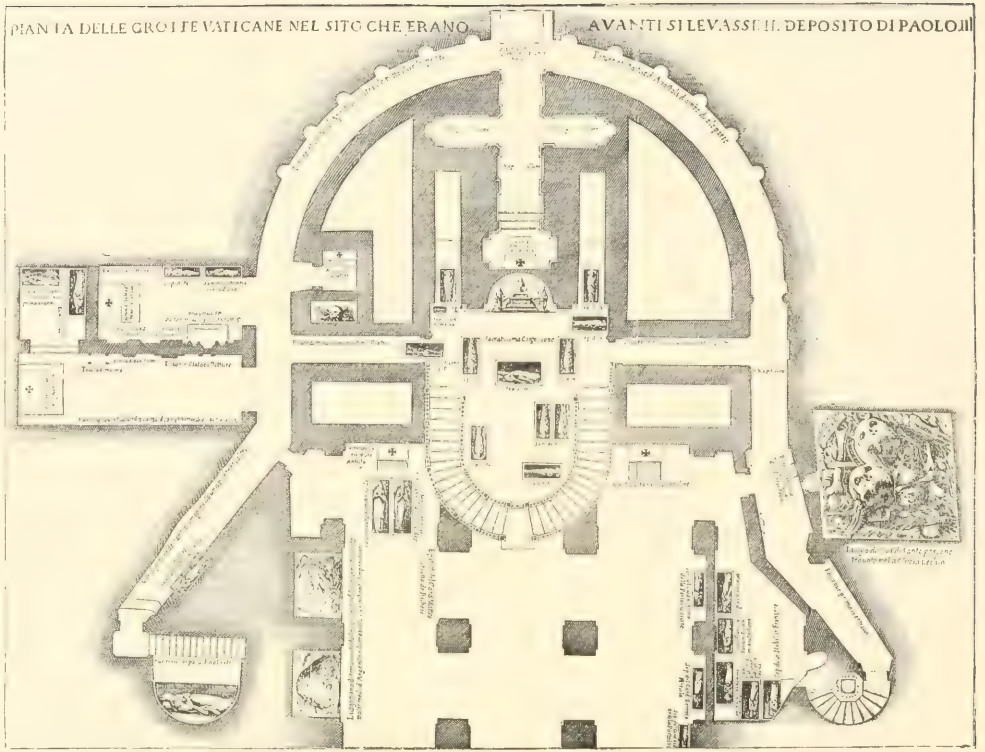
This persistent tradition of an episcopacy lasting twenty or twenty-five years does not, in the opinion of Roman Catholic writers, preclude the acceptance of an absence of S. Peter from Rome during part of this time. They maintain that he first visited Rome *circa* A.D. 42, and from this date onwards till his death exercised a general control in that Church.

e. Certain references in S. Paul's epistles to the Romans have been quoted (notably by Bishop Lightfoot, *Clement of Rome*, Vol. ii., pp. 491 and 497) as incompatible with the theory of the earlier visit of S. Peter to Rome, and the long connection of the elder Apostle with that great church. The reference dwelt on especially is Rom. xv. 19–24. Now the passage, it has been pointed out, will bear an exactly opposite interpretation to the one suggested by Lightfoot; for in it S. Paul tells us that, although for years it had been one of his great desires *to see Rome*, yet he had abstained from going there precisely because it was *not* virgin soil—"lest I should build upon another man's foundation."

What is clearly proved is that by the fourth century the tradition was established, and apparently undisputed.

To sum the matter up: The presence and preaching of S. Peter at Rome between A.D. 62 and 67 cannot be doubted; and that the great Apostle suffered martyrdom in that city during the Neronian persecution, probably in the latter days of that awful period, is also well-nigh certain. That he visited and preached at an earlier period, and continued to exercise a kind of presidency over the Roman Christian community—a presidency generally referred to as the twenty-five years'

* These lists are contained in the *Chronicle* of Eusebius. In the Armenian version the period of twenty years is named; in the Latin version of S. Jerome, twenty-five.



PLAN OF THE CRYPT CONTAINING THE GRAVES OF S. PETER AND THE EARLY BISHOPS OF ROME.

Discovered in 1615. The plan was executed by Benedetto Drei (clerk of the works at S. Peter's), and was first published in 1635.

episcopate—is and must remain, with the materials of history we now possess, open to question. We can only affirm with certainty that the tradition was thoroughly established and apparently undisputed in the fourth century.

. . . . . .

The oldest tradition in the *Liber Pontificalis* relates that nine of the immediate successors of Peter were buried in the Vatican Crypt; the names are given. After S. Victor, A.D. 202, the Papal Crypt in the Catacomb of S. Callistus became the usual burying place of the Popes. The same authority tells us that the Emperor Constantine enclosed the stone coffin which contained the body of the blessed Peter, in bronze, and then built up the whole with solid masonry (but apparently leaving the space actually above the loculus or coffin to the ceiling, free); upon the coffin Constantine placed a cross of pure gold, weighing one hundred and fifty pounds.

In A.D. 1594, in the course of the works which were being carried on in the new basilica, the ground gave way, and through the opening Pope Clement VIII. and the Cardinals Bellarmine, Sfondrato and Antoniano, with the help of a torch, could see the golden cross inscribed with the names of Constantine and Helena. The aperture was immediately filled up with cement, in the presence of the Pope himself.

In A.D. 1615, when Pope Paul V. (Borghesi) was building the stairs leading to the Confession of S. Peter and the Crypts, the workmen employed came upon the crypt containing the graves of the early Bishops of Rome buried "*in Vaticano.*" One of the coffins bore the name LINVS who, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, had been originally buried by the side of Peter. The plan we have given of this most sacred spot was drawn by Benedetto Drei, clerk of the works in S. Peter's, an eye-witness of the discoveries made at that time. (The plan was published in A.D. 1635.) It is an invaluable record of what lies beneath the Mother Church of Christianity. It is exceedingly rare. The engraving we have given is from a copy in the British Museum Library. The Sarcophagus of S. Peter was presumably in the centre; its position in the picture is a little above the words "Sacratissima Confessione." It is, however, completely concealed by the solid masonry of Constantine above alluded to.

Only a few years later, in A.D. 1626, when the vast foundations of the enormous Baldachino, erected by Pope Urban VIII. (Barberini), were being constructed, the crypt above described was again seen and examined, and generally the details which Drei's map revealed were substantiated. Many particulars concerning the wonderful things which were then seen are given in the account which was written down

at the time by Ubaldi, a Canon of the great Basilica of S. Peter's—whose narrative, long forgotten and hidden in the archives of the Vatican, has been comparatively recently brought to light, transcribed and published by Professor Armellini in his book *Le Chiese di Roma*. An English translation of Ubaldi's record is given by Barnes in his exhaustive and scholarly work, *S. Peter in Rome and his Tomb on the Vatican Hill* (London, 1900).

From Ubaldi's memoranda it would seem that a more thorough examination of that sacred crypt was made, viz. in A.D. 1626, than the somewhat earlier one represented in Drei's plan, and that many more interments were discovered besides those indicated by Drei. One very remarkable passage of Ubaldi runs as follows: "Almost at the level of the pavement, there was found a coffin made of fine and large slabs of marble. . . . This coffin was placed, just as were the others which were found on the other side within the circle of the presbytery, in such a manner that they were all directed towards the altar, like spokes towards the centre of a wheel. Hence, it was evident with how much reason the place merited the name of the Council of Martyrs. . . . These bodies surrounded S. Peter just as they would have done, when living, at a Council."

APPENDIX C.

ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE SEVEN EPISTLES AND THE ACTS OF MARTYRDOM OF S. IGNATIUS.

SECTION I.—THE SEVEN EPISTLES.

The letters of S. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in Syria, profess to have been written by the saint as he was passing through Asia Minor on his way to Rome, where he was to suffer death by exposure to the wild beasts in the public amphitheatre. The date of the writings is commonly given as A.D. 107 to A.D. 110. The letters that are now generally accepted by scholars as absolutely authentic are seven in number, five of these being addressed to different churches of Asia Minor, viz. to Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, and Smyrna; one to Rome, and one to the then Bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp.

There are three recensions of the Ignatian epistles extant.

The first, or *Longer form*. This recension contains twelve epistles. Besides containing the seven letters above referred to, it includes five extra epistles. The form in which the seven epistles are given is considerably longer than the accepted one. This recension is now universally condemned by scholars as spurious.

The second, or *Middle form*, contains the seven epistles above enumerated; a good deal of the matter incorporated in the first or longer form is here omitted. This recension is sometimes alluded to as the Vossian, from the scholar Isaac Voss, who in A.D. 1646 published the first Greek edition of six of the seven epistles. It is now very generally acknowledged by scholars as genuine.

The third, or *Short form*, is represented only by a Syriac version, which was published for the first time by Canon Cureton (Westminster) in 1845 from MSS. recently brought to the British Museum

from the Nitrian desert. This recension contains but three epistles, viz. those addressed to Polycarp, to the Ephesians, and to the Romans, and the text of the three epistles is also abbreviated. In spite of the advocacy of some scholars, this "Short form" is not now looked upon as at all representing the text of the original writings of Ignatius. It is evidently an abridgment or mutilation of the second or Middle form of recension. Bishop Lightfoot considers A.D. 400, or a few years earlier, as a probable date when this abridgment in the Syriac version was first put out.

To return to the Middle or Vossian Recension. "This text," says Lightfoot, "of the seven epistles is assured to us on testimony considerably greater than that of any ancient classical author, with one or two exceptions."

This testimony we will briefly summarise.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.—In the epistle of *Polycarp*, which belongs to the first years of the second century, we find several unmistakable references to the acknowledged seven Ignatian letters. *Irenæus*, writing from fifty to seventy years later, quotes verbatim from the letter to the Romans, and has references besides to several others of the seven Ignatian letters. Some twenty years earlier than Irenæus *the letter of the Smyrna Church to the Philomelians*, with the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, shows an acquaintance with the Ignatian epistles. Echoes of these letters, too, are found in the *Epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons*, giving an account of the martyrdoms in these cities. This epistle was written *circa* A.D. 177. *Lucian*, the Pagan satirist, *circa* A.D. 165–170, in his celebrated satire or romance, *De Morte Peregrini*, evidently alludes to and apparently bases a portion of his writing upon the story of Ignatius as contained in the seven epistles.

Towards the middle of the third century we find at least two direct quotations from the epistles to the Romans and Ephesians in the writings of *Origen*. The references direct and indirect of these early writers of centuries two and three were made exclusively from the seven epistles contained in the second or middle form of recension only.

Eusebius of Cæsarea, the Church historian in the first half of the fourth century, gives us a full and definite account of the Ignatian letters, quoting from each of them, *but only from the seven of this recension.*

From the age of Eusebius onward—that is, from the middle of the fourth century—"the testimony is of the most varied kind. The epistles of Ignatius appear, whole or in part, not only in the original

Greek, but in Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Latin, etc. They are abridged, expanded, imitated. . . . No early Christian writing outside the Canon of the New Testament scripture is attested by witnesses so many and so various. . . . And in this many-tongued chorus there is not one dissentient voice."

Throughout the whole period of Christian history before the Reformation not a suspicion of their genuineness is breathed by friend or foe.

The INTERNAL EVIDENCE furnished by the seven epistles is equally strong.

Bishop Lightfoot, in his long and exhaustive treatise, partitions this internal evidence into five or six groups :—(1) The historical and geographical circumstances; (2) the ecclesiastical conditions; (3) the theological polemics; (4) the literary obligations; (5) the personality of the writer; and (6) the style and diction of the letters.

On the first point, the historical surroundings of the famous martyrdom, much has been said as to the improbability of the long journey from Antioch to the Roman amphitheatre. But this is well answered by an investigation into the practices of that age of Trajan, when the enormous number of victims required for the Imperial games is taken into account. After his second Dacian triumph in A.D. 106, for instance, the Emperor celebrated games in the metropolis which lasted 123 days, and in which some 11,000 wild and tame beasts were slaughtered, and as many as 10,000 gladiators fought. For these bloody entertainments the Governors in the provinces no doubt were ever on the search for victims.

A small escort, like that which guarded Ignatius, would pick up detachments of prisoners condemned to die, at different places on the route. Just such a reinforcement of the sad convoy, Polycarp tells us, was annexed to the company of Ignatius at Philippi; we find, too, references to this practice in classical writers.

The devotion of friends, the pressing round him of devotees during that weary journey, the attention and reverent admiration of so many at the various halting places on that triumphal march of the Christian martyr, is reproduced with marvellous accuracy in the curious Satire upon the Cynics and the Christians by the Pagan Lucian. The romance, *De Morte Peregrini*, above mentioned, so exactly pictures scenes from the journey of Ignatius, that not a few scholars think that Lucian, writing *circa* A.D. 165, drew much of his brilliant, though sarcastic, Christian portraiture from the story. Be this how it may, Lucian would not have filled his recital with circumstances impossible or even improbable.

The *geographical notices* * in the letters are absolutely accurate. The *ecclesiastical conditions*,* moreover, incidentally described therein, perfectly accord with all that we know of the government and internal arrangements of the Christian Church in the early years of the second century; while the *theological polemics* * are exactly what we should expect, neither more or less developed than we should look for at that early period in the Church's history.

Till the days of the Reformation, then, the Ignatian epistles were accepted without dispute. On the revival of learning, however, in the sixteenth century certain misgivings on the part of scholars began to arise, owing to manifest historical errors discovered in the longer recension which was commonly used in the middle ages.

At the period of the Reformation, Protestant controversialists like Calvin were bitterly offended at the overwhelming testimony to episcopacy contained in these letters, and this school angrily condemned them as spurious. Milton in 1641, and the Puritan writers, renewed the attack with fierce denunciation. Archbishop Ussher in A.D. 1644, however, with his wonderful erudition and critical genius, largely restored the original text by the aid of some ancient Latin MSS., sweeping away the five extra epistles, and purging the text of the genuine letters of the interpolated matter; while Isaac Voss, in A.D. 1646, published six out of the seven authentic epistles in the original Greek from a recently discovered Florentine MS. (The Greek text of the remaining epistle to the Romans, missing in Voss's discovery, was found about half a century later.) The work of Ussher and Voss in the restoration of the original text has been criticised again and again; but in the main the accuracy of their labours has been established by the subsequent investigation of scholars; and the publication of the great scholarly work of Lightfoot, Bishop of Durham, on the apostolic fathers, put out in the latter years of the nineteenth century, has virtually closed the question for ever. We are now assured that we possess the precious seven epistles of Ignatius in their entirety, purged from all the additional matter which had gradually gathered round the original compositions of the martyr Bishop of Antioch.

(The seven authentic epistles of S. Ignatius, translated, occupy some 32 large octavo pages, printed in fairly good type.)

* These various points, which are only just touched upon in this brief note, are all discussed at great length, with rare learning and profound scholarship, by Bishop Lightfoot, who has made that period, and the position occupied by Ignatius, peculiarly his own. See *Apostolic Fathers*, S. Ignatius and S. Polycarp, vol. i., vi., pp. 354–430. Lightfoot closes his long and exhaustive dissertation thus:—"On these grounds we are constrained to accept the Seven Epistles of the Middle form as the genuine work of Ignatius."

SECTION II.—THE ACTS OF MARTYRDOM.

THESE "Acts" we possess in five forms. Three of these must be set aside as evidently combinations of two older documents.

These two older documents may be termed the *Antiochene* and *Roman* Acts respectively. Of these two the Roman may be safely disregarded; internal evidence condemns it as pure romance, the product of an age considerably posterior to that of the saint of whose "passion" it professedly gives a detailed account.

The other document, the "Antiochene Acts" of martyrdom, is considered by many serious critics, notably by Archbishop Ussher, Pearson, Leclerc, and lately by the French scholar and writer Allard (end of nineteenth century), as being substantially genuine; largely spurious no doubt in its present form, but based upon an early and authentic document incorporated in the present later text which has come down to us, it has obtained a wide circulation, and is read as an authoritative piece not only by Greek-speaking Christians, but also in Armenia and in all the churches of Latin Christianity.

On the other hand Bishop Lightfoot, after a searching examination, decides that the "Acts" in question have no claim to be regarded as an *authentic* document; but, at the same time, he carefully adds his opinion that possibly they embody some earlier document, and thus may preserve a residuum of genuine tradition. This eminent scholar especially dwells on the later portion of the narrative, which professes to be related by eye-witnesses: "I cannot help feeling impressed," he says, "with the air of truthfulness, or, at least, of verisimilitude, in some incidents in the latter portion of the narrative . . . I should be disposed to believe that the martyrologist had incorporated into the latter portion of his narrative *a contemporary letter of the martyr's companions*, containing an account of the journey from Philippi (to Rome) and the death, although freely interpolating and altering it when he was so disposed."

He suggests the fifth or sixth century as the probable date for the composition or redaction of the Antiochene Acts in their present form.

APPENDIX D.

NOTES ON THE PASSION OF S. PERPETUA.

(1) *The different writers in the "Passion."*—This well-known incident in the history of the Christian Church in North Africa consists of three distinct pieces welded into one narrative by a redactor or editor, who, no doubt, was a contemporary of Perpetua and her companions. Its great interest consists in the memoranda or notes of Perpetua relating to her prison experiences, among which were those remarkable dreams which she relates in singularly vivid language. A short piece incorporated with the narrative of Perpetua purports to have been written by one of her fellow-prisoners, Saturus, once her teacher in the Faith, containing the memories of a dream or vision of his shortly before his martyrdom.

A brief introduction, and a somewhat lengthy but most graphic and eloquent account of the last scenes in the arena when Perpetua and her companions suffered, is by another hand—that of the redactor or editor—who, he tells us, added this narrative to Perpetua's memoranda, in fulfilment of a promise made to her before her martyrdom.

The variations in style and composition between these three portions are marked. The vocabulary used is very different in each of the cases. The "memories" of Perpetua and the one little narrative of Saturus are perfectly simple and unrestrained; the recollections, indeed, of highly cultured persons, but written down absolutely without any attempt at eloquence. The preface and the concluding account of the martyrdom, on the other hand, are undeniably beautiful, but are evidently the composition of a trained writer and thinker.

(2) *Very early use of the "Passion."*—It was known to and extensively used by Tertullian, the great African writer, at the beginning of the third century. He was a contemporary of Perpetua's; indeed, some consider that Tertullian himself was the redactor we have alluded to. S. Augustine, writing about the end of the fourth century, cites

this "'Passion' of Perpetua' several times. It is the theme of three of his discourses, and it is quoted at least four times besides in his writings.

(3) *The abbreviated Latin "Acts."*—The "Passion" is best known to Church historians through the medium of a condensed edition, generally known as the "short Latin Acts," read in churches on the day when S. Perpetua and her companions in martyrdom were commemorated, the original "Acts" being too long for liturgical use. These shorter Latin Acts were evidently an abbreviation of the longer form. They contain, however, a detailed account of the trial of the martyr before the Roman magistrate, which is not in the original. Some critical scholars believe that this account is authentic, being based upon an original *procès-verbal* which was preserved.

This shorter Latin form of the Acts was used in the older Roman Church, as well as in the East, and for a long time was contained in the Roman breviary. Eventually it was omitted to make room for S. Thomas Aquinas.

(4) *Re-discovery of longer form of "Acts."*—The longer and more authentic Latin form was only re-discovered in the seventeenth century, in the library of the great Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino, in a MS. written partly in the eleventh and partly in the twelfth century; and although other MSS. of the Acts are said to exist, the Monte Cassino MS. is still the basis of the Latin text now used. In 1889 Professor Rendel Harris discovered a complete Greek text of the martyrdom in the library of the Convent of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, the MS. written apparently in the tenth century (of course copied from an older copy). Allard relates how another Latin MS. of the "Passion" was found as late as 1892 in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. No doubt, as time goes on, other MSS. will turn up, as the great libraries are more carefully searched. It is a matter of dispute whether the original was written in Latin or in Greek. The balance of evidence seems rather to point to *Latin*. One argument carries much weight. In the vision of Saturus it is expressly stated that Perpetua talked Greek with the bishop or presbyter outside the heavenly gate—a remark which would be incomprehensible if the original document had been composed in the Greek language. The Greek version, however, is certainly of a very early date, and is, generally speaking, admirable.

(5) *The Visions of S. Perpetua.*—Distinct from the historical interest of Perpetua's account of the life led in prison by the Christian accused, and of the intercourse allowed between the accused and the ordinary citizens, the dreams and visions of Perpetua and Saturus, as related by

themselves, are most important contributions to our knowledge of the hope and faith which supported the early Christians all through the period of their bitter trial, and gave them courage to endure these sufferings.

We have already, in our summary of the "Passion" in the text of our history, dwelt a little on the frame of mind which would render such visions or dreams probable. Now much, though not all, of the framework, so to speak, of these remarkable visions is based on what we may term the current Christian literature of the age. "It is a familiar experience with us that all our dreams can frequently be traced back to thoughts which have been present to our waking moments, and that their materials, in whatever strange combinations they may present themselves, are derived largely from our recollections;" but "we shall not for that reason," adds the writer of the above suggestive words, "be tempted to question their genuineness."*

Unmistakably in all the visions in the "Passion" there are many recollections of scenes and words which we find in Holy Scripture. The imagery of the Ladder in Perpetua's first dream, for instance, was suggested, no doubt, by the ladder in Jacob's dream in Genesis. In the dream relating to Dinocrates, her suffering child-brother, the great gulf between Abraham's bosom and the place of torment where the rich man found himself is evidently remembered.

Not a few memories of the scenery and the persons of the apocalypse of S. John colour the dreams of Perpetua and Saturus. And there was another book, written some forty or fifty years before, which had attained to enormous popularity in the Church. This book was the "Shepherd of Hermas." There we find many curious and interesting details which more or less clearly reappear in the visions of Perpetua and Saturus.

So great was the popularity of the "Shepherd of Hermas" in many of the early congregations of Christians, that although it never was counted among the inspired writings included in the New Testament Canon, yet it was not infrequently bound up in the same volume with the New Testament, and in certain churches was even read in the public services. Besides the memories of the Old and New Testaments and of the "Shepherd of Hermas," the influence of other apocalyptic writings in vogue in the second century was clearly at work in the minds of these highly-wrought and earnest confessors.

All these natural suggestions as to the sources of the colouring of their scenes, however, by no means exclude the belief that the Lord,

* Prof. Armitage Robinson, in *Texts and Studies: The Passion of S. Perpetua.* Cambridge, 1891.

by means of these visions, directly intended to comfort and support the souls of His brave suffering witnesses.

(6) *Is the "Passion of S. Perpetua" a Montanistic writing?*—Theologians have noticed, and called attention to, the strong Montanistic colouring, specially observable in the Introduction and Peroration by the editor and compiler of the "Passion;" where allusions to the work of the Holy Spirit, then working with peculiar energy in the Church, are pointedly made; the writer evidently assuming that there would be, in the age in which he was living (the first years of the third century), a more abundant outpouring of the Holy Ghost than had ever been the case before. It seems highly probable that the compiler was a Montanist. Arguing from this, some have suggested that Perpetua and her companions also belonged to the Montanist sect. Bishop Freppel in his "Tertullian" strongly and effectually disposes of this hypothesis, which, if accepted, would diminish the great weight of the words of Perpetua as a representative of the Catholic Church in the very first years of the third century. Never, said the learned Bishop, would the Church have accorded to one tainted with even a suspicion of the errors of Montanism so eminent a position as that given to Perpetua, and in a less degree to her companion Felicitas; these illustrious confessors with Cyprian, alone among the many North African martyrs, being included in the famous fourth century catalogue of saints to be commemorated in the Church of Rome. Their names appear in the most ancient Canon of the Mass, and their memories are shrined in the oldest martyrologies. They were the subject, too, as we have remarked, of three of the extant sermons of Augustine.

(7) *The Montanists.*—The date of the origin of Montanism has been variously given. Epiphanius gives two dates, A.D. 127 and A.D. 157; Eusebius giving A.D. 173. Little is known of its founder, Montanus, who was a native of Mysia. On many points of Christian teaching it was *no heresy*. The doctrine taught respecting God and His Christ in no wise differed from Catholic teaching. But as regards the work of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of the Montanists was wild and uncertain. They believed that at intervals the Holy Spirit descended upon men in more abundant measure, completing and supplementing the original Christian revelation. They bitterly resented their subsequent exclusion from the Communion of the Church, but they had virtually excommunicated themselves by condemning the rest of the Christian world. They professed a stern, rigorous ascetism, a perfection of manners, so to speak, different from others. Their fasts were longer and more severe. Their views on marriage were most

unpractical; if they did not absolutely condemn it, they hardly suffered it, while a second marriage was in their eyes an unpardonable sin. In their counsels of perfection they pressed upon Christians the sternest and most austere life. The ordinary Christians in their rigorous creed occupied a low and inferior position.

It is not too much to say that the often deficient teaching of the Catholic Church as to the influence of the Holy Ghost was owing in great measure to a reaction against the extravagances which the Montanists loved to connect with a special illapse of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. To take well-known instances of this strange omission in Christian teaching, in that most ancient hymn of adoration, the "Gloria in Excelsis" (sung or said at the conclusion of the Communion Office), the Blessed Spirit is only mentioned quite at the close, and then only with inexplicable brevity. In the Middle Ages, in the "Imitation of Christ," the most popular devotional work Christianity has ever put out—a popularity which knows no sign of decrease or abatement as time wears on—a treatise which is loved and prized still in all the churches of the West by all schools of thought, scarcely a mention of the Person and office or of the blessed influence of God the Holy Ghost occurs.

(8) *The Pregnancy of Felicitas.*—That the state of Felicitas should prevent her from being exposed to the wild beasts was a well-known practice in accordance with Roman law. So Ulpian (*Digest* xlviii., xix. 3), "Prægnantis mulieris . . . pœna differtur quoad pariat." The Roman law here has passed into the laws of England, and is carefully observed when capital punishment is in question.

(9) *The condemned Christians being vested as idol priests and priestesses.*—The martyrs, we read, bitterly resented the attempt to vest them with the dress and ornaments of *Ceres* and *Saturn*. These deities were chosen because in Carthage, where the deadly drama was to be played, Ceres represented *Tanit*, and Saturn *Baal-Ammon*, the two greatest divinities of the Carthaginians.

(10) *Honours paid by the Church to the Memory of Perpetua and Felicitas.*—In addition to the reverence showed by the Church to these famous North African martyrs, mentioned in the text, we know that in the fifth century, probably at an earlier date even, a basilica had been erected at Carthage over the "Memoria," or chapel-tomb of Perpetua and Felicitas.

APPENDIX E.

EUSEBIUS THE HISTORIAN, AND LACTANTIUS.

Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, was born *circa* A.D. 260–5. From his earliest days he seems to have been an earnest student of sacred literature. While still comparatively young he became connected with Pamphilus, the master of the Theological School of Cæsarea, which possessed a famous church library; to the care and augmentation of which Eusebius paid special attention. When in A.D. 303 the Diocletian persecution burst on the Church, Pamphilus was arrested, and suffered martyrdom two years later. During the imprisonment of his friend and master, Eusebius was in constant attendance on him. After Pamphilus' death Eusebius withdrew to Tyre, and subsequently to Egypt, where he was arrested for the Faith's sake. He was, however, soon released. Potammon, the Confessor, in later years, charged him with procuring his freedom by apostasy. "Who art thou, Eusebius," said the rough and impetuous Confessor as they sat together at the Council of Tyre, "to judge Athanasius? Didst not thou sit with me in prison at the time of the tyrants? They plucked out my eye for the confession of the truth; thou camest forth unharmed. How didst thou escape?" But the grave charge is incredible. Had it been true, the elevation of Eusebius to the see of Cæsarea not long afterwards would have been impossible; never would an ecclesiastic have been nominated to so important a position had he been an apostate in the persecution. Besides, never would one, who in the time of peril had been a renegade, have set himself to search out the precious memories of the great persecution, and have devoted so considerable a portion of his life-work to do honour to the noble martyr army. The short story of the martyrs of Palestine,* and the eighth and ninth books of the ecclesiastical history of Eusebius, are the most

* The story of the "Martyrs of Palestine" is included in the Eighth Book of the *H. E.*, to which it forms a kind of Appendix: the chapters being numbered separately.

serious and important contemporary pieces we possess on the subject of the terrible Diocletian persecution. Some surprise has been expressed at the historian's departure from his usual custom of dwelling on the general history of the Church, and confining himself, in the books treating of this period, to the Eastern area. The reason no doubt was that Eusebius, sensible of the deep importance of the last terrible struggle of Christianity against Paganism, restricted himself to those events of which he had been an eye-witness, or could be assured of the evidence of eye-witnesses. Hence his silence as to the trials of the Church in the Western provinces of Rome.

The whole ecclesiastical history, of which these two books form a part, consists of ten books, the last being mainly occupied by a relation of the happy consequences which immediately followed the "Peace of the Church." But it is in the "Memoranda" contained in Books I. to VII. that Eusebius has won his undying title to honour. These are simply priceless. They are not skilfully put together, it is true: the arrangement is sadly wanting in method, and often even in graphic interest; but they give us a mass of information at first hand, stretching over the whole period of the trial-time of the Christians, especially valuable in the history of the second century, owing to the numerous quotations from writings of that age now lost. No doubt, when Eusebius wrote these "lost works" were still extant, and were to be found in the great library of Cæsarea, with which he was so intimately connected.

Of his other works, perhaps, the *Chronicon*, in two books, is the most important for students of Church history. It comprises an historical sketch, with chronological tables of the more memorable events in the history of the world from the times of Abraham to the twentieth year of the reign of the Emperor Constantine. In his "Life of Constantine," an important study, Eusebius has been charged with writing rather from the stand-point of a courtier than from that of an historian. That he was a fervid admirer of the great sovereign, who was his friend and patron, is undoubted; but it must be borne in mind that the "Life" was written *after* Constantine's death. No mere sordid feeling then could have coloured the writer's memoir of his dead friend and sovereign. Moreover, many of the documents quoted in the "Life" reappear in the works of Lactantius, Augustine, and others, these authors deriving their knowledge of the events in question largely from the State archives.

As a theologian he has been severely criticised; Newman, in his history of the Arians of the fourth century, charging him with "openly siding with the Arians." On the other hand, well-known Anglican

scholars—*e.g.* Bishop Bull—defend his orthodoxy. In truth, the great historian was neither Arian nor Athanasian; he was the representative of the indeterminate theology of the Church on the great points in dispute before the formulæ known as Athanasian and Arian had become stereotyped. In other words, he was too old-fashioned to readily adopt formulæ which were unknown to the school in which he had been trained. *But he was certainly never an Arian.* Eusebius, however, is important as a historian rather than as a theologian.

This great writer, to whom the Catholic Church owes so deep a debt for his life-long researches, and for his faithful guardianship of so many treasures—which but for his patient work would have been lost to men—cannot certainly be charged with ambition; for when in late life he might have filled the great patriarchate of Antioch, he preferred simply to retain his earlier and less distinguished position, feeling doubtless that the higher office would have interfered with the life-task which he so well discharged.

None of the fathers—not even Origen or Jerome—were his equals in erudition; and those who justly complain of his dry uninteresting style, forget that it is just this very fault which constitutes the strange charm and the priceless value of his greatest work, his ecclesiastical history. He gives us the very words of the ancient Christian writers whom he quotes, making no attempt to fashion and mould them into a brilliant and attractive history.

Lactantius.

A few words on another and far less famous writer than Eusebius, to whom, however, we owe much of our knowledge of the history of the times of Diocletian and Constantine, will be of interest to the historical student. Lactantius, whose historical treatise especially—*De Mortibus Persecutorum*—is of the greatest use to the chronicler of the events of the last persecution, was a writer of no little power. From the beauty of his style he has been called the "Christian Cicero." Little is known of his early life. At the invitation of Diocletian he became a public teacher in Nicomedia, the favourite city of the great Emperor, where no doubt his intimacy with the master of the Roman world gave him rare opportunities of becoming acquainted with the circumstances which led up to the great persecution. Later he was asked by Constantine the Great to become tutor to his eldest son, the ill-fated Crispus; and for a considerable period he enjoyed the friendship of the Christian Emperor.

These rare opportunities of learning much of the secret history of

the eventful epoch were well used by Lactantius. His most important work, *Divinarum Institutionum Libri Septem*, concerns itself rather with theology and Christian philosophy than with history; still, it is not wanting in historical references of real value. But his famous treatise on the "Deaths of the Persecutors" is a very valuable, though somewhat rhetorical, piece of contemporary history. It sets out to describe God's judgments on the persecutors of His Church from Nero to Diocletian; but by far the greater part of the work is devoted to the story of the harrying the Christian communities by Diocletian and his colleagues in the Empire. Of much of this harrying Lactantius was an eye-witness, and he was personally acquainted with several of the masters of the Roman world at the period of the last terrible conflict of Paganism and Christianity.

Some doubts have arisen respecting the authorship of this treatise. In the earlier printed editions of Lactantius the piece in question is wanting; it was first brought to light and printed by Stephen Baluze in A.D. 1679, from an ancient MS. Those critics who question the authorship ascribe it to some more obscure rhetorician of the same period. But the intimate knowledge of the inner history of the times displayed by the writer is a strong argument in support of Lactantius, whose position as a famous rhetorician, held in high esteem at Court by men like Constantine (who subsequently entrusted him with the education of his son), would have given him special access to the inner circles of the Imperial Court. The style, too, and expression of the treatise are in perfect harmony with the other known writings of the author. Allard, the French scholar, the most recent historian of the period, in his great and exhaustive work on the persecutions, makes copious use of it as a book "dont l'authenticité n'est plus contestée." (*Persécution de Dioclétien*—vol. i., Paris, 1898—Introduction, iv.)

Gibbon fiercely assails Lactantius with the abuse and sarcasm of which he was so skilled a master, but his animosity was evoked by the bitter hatred of Paganism and its defenders which so strongly colours the writings he attacks. To some extent the estimate of the great historian has influenced the judgment which later writers have generally formed of the works of this most interesting and valuable contemporary witness.

APPENDIX F.

THE EARLY HERESIES OF THE CHURCH.

The Christian Church from the earliest days of its existence had to meet and combat strange, and to us somewhat unaccountable, heresies. As these for the most part disappeared before the first three centuries had run their course, leaving few traces behind them, we shall not weary the student with any long detailed account of them. The Manichœan heresy, a late development of Gnosticism, in some of its developments alone seems to have lived on into the Middle Ages.

Gnosticism is a name which primarily suggests a claim to more than ordinary knowledge. The following rough characteristic features generally belonged to its professors.

(*a*) Gnosticism would not now be classed as a "heresy" at all. In none of its various developments was it a corruption of Christianity. It was in all respects a different religion, which engrafted certain Christian ideas into its several systems. The term "heresy" was used by early writers in a greatly extended sense. Gnosticism probably made little headway among the *Christian communities* themselves; its malignant influences affected only their fringes—but no doubt it attracted largely their Pagan neighbours in different countries to its mystic speculations.

(*b*) As a rule all Gnostic sects held that evil inheres in matter.

(*c*) The result of this belief led these "heretics" to deny the resurrection of the body altogether, as they regarded death as freeing the soul once for all from the state of imprisonment in the body.

(*d*) Our world was not formed by the supreme God, but by another Being, who had proceeded from Him, not directly, but through suc cessive generations of spiritual Beings. This Being, to whom the creation of the world was attributed, is generally termed the Demiurge. Him the Jews worshipped. He was the God of the Old Testament. In the various Gnostic systems this Demiurge, or Creator of the world,

occupied different positions. In some of their schools he is represented as hostile to the Supreme; in others, a subordinate and unconscious instrument of the will of the Supreme.

As a result of this generally received Gnostic article of belief, the Old Testament was usually rejected, and by some Gnostic schools was even abhorred.

These fantastic teachings seem to have appeared very early, and were probably alluded to by both S. Paul and S. John. As time advanced the Gnostic systems grew more complex and elaborate, each particular sect—for there were many—fashioning and shaping them according to their own liking, largely drawing upon Oriental religions for their grotesque and often uncouth fancies.

Valentinus, one of the ablest and most imaginative of these teachers, who flourished about the middle of the second century, or rather earlier, elaborated perhaps the most popular form of Gnostic belief. From the first principle, self-existent and perfect, proceeded various grades of Beings, or "Æons." From the first grade, by successive generations emanated other and lower Beings. Among these Christ* is found, and the Holy Spirit, and still later the Demiurge, who created Man.

To dwell upon these curious and fanciful speculations would be, in a history of the Christian Church, an unprofitable task, especially as well-nigh the only materials for such an investigation are contained in the writings of certain Christian fathers, notably Irenæus and

* The Christian idea of redemption evidently was not absent from the Gnostic conception, but the declarations about Christ in its different schools were exceedingly various. Even amongst the Valentinian teachers, as far as we can gather, very different conceptions existed of Him. It seems that Valentinus himself truly acknowledged neither the Humanity nor the Divinity of the Saviour; generally, Gnosticism taught that Jesus Christ, abhorring all communion with matter, assumed a *docetic* or apparitional body. Among the Gnostic teachers *Marcion*, who taught in the last quarter of the second century, perhaps alone among the Gnostic leaders, professed to be purely Christian in his doctrine, and took for the basis of his system the New Testament scriptures; but here he was eclectic. Among the gospels he only acknowledged S. Luke's, and ten of the Pauline epistles; freely cutting out, even from these writings, any statements which were at variance with his own peculiar and fantastic theories. The other books of the New Testament he considered were tainted with Judaism. He rejected without exception all the books of the Old Testament. Marcion, in common with other Gnostic masters, held that Matter was evil, and that Matter had its Lord, eternal and evil. He taught, too, that between the Lord of Matter and the Supreme God existed a third Being, the Demiurge (who created Man), who probably was an emanation from the Supreme; but this is uncertain. This Demiurge was the God of the Jews. The work of the Demiurge in some respects was independent of the Supreme God, and hence faulty. Jesus Christ was sent by the Supreme God to earth to redeem man without the knowledge of the Demiurge.

Hippolytus. Irenæus wrote in the last quarter of the second century, and Hippolytus a very few years later. To these may be added Origen, who wrote about a quarter of a century after Hippolytus, and Epiphanius (second half of the fourth century). These writers being the bitterest opponents of the Gnostic theories, their presentment of them was inevitably coloured by this intense enmity. The charges especially brought against the great Gnostic leaders of impurity and corruption in their lives must be viewed with some suspicion.

But when all these allowances for possible exaggerations or even misrepresentations on the part of their Christian adversaries have been made, when it has been conceded that the "fanciful and grotesque" in these Gnostic systems has been perhaps unduly pressed, when the charges of impurity and lawlessness in their way of life have been, if not dropped, at least largely modified in the case of many of these followers of Gnosticism; there remains, absolutely proven, the fact that Gnosticism in its varied and various developments was *not Christianity*, not even a perverted Christianity, but a perfectly different religion. The few points of resemblance, here and there noticeable, in no way affected the general Gnostic teaching. As set forth by Menander, Cerinthus, Basilides, and Valentinus, and even Marcion —to name a few of the most conspicuous masters—it was to all intents and purposes a new religion.

With one or two possible exceptions, the actual writings of the Gnostics have disappeared. In later times a Gnostic hymn of some length was discovered in the Syriac "Acts of Judas Thomas, the Apostle." The hymn, however, has no apparent connection with the "Acts of Thomas," no possible bearing on the narrative therein contained; it is only found in one MS. (now in the British Museum Library), and has evidently been borrowed from some extraneous source and inserted in this MS., which only dates from the tenth century. It has been accurately described by a modern scholar in the following terms: "We have here an ancient *Gnostic* hymn relating to the soul, which is sent from its heavenly home to the earth, and there forgets both its origin and its mission until it is aroused by a revelation from on high; thereupon it performs the task assigned to it, and returns to the upper regions, when it is reunited to the heavenly robe, its ideal counterpart, and enters the presence of the highest celestial Powers." From *internal* evidence the hymn must have been written before A.D. 224, and probably was put out some years before this date. It contains several of the well-known Gnostic "heresies." (1) It regards the separation of the soul from the body as a blessing, representing the human body as a filthy and unclean garb. (2) It holds the theory of the existence

of a number of lesser Gods; that is to say, of eternal Beings subordinate to the Supreme God. (3) It never, however, refers to the New Testament, or even alludes to the historical facts on which Christianity is founded.

We have spoken at some length of this recently discovered "Great Hymn of the Soul," which is a poem of extraordinary beauty; because, as far as we know, it is the only * piece of pure Gnostic literature extant which has not come down to us through the medium of Christian writers. And while we acknowledge its high merit as a striking composition, full of beauty of thought, and coloured with pure and noble ideals, it fully bears out the conception we have formed of Gnosticism, as a system altogether alien from Christianity; possessing, indeed, few points in common with it, save the shadows of a few names and a certain number of borrowed doctrines, which when examined closely are found to possess little likeness to the original Christian teaching.

The rough dates of the Gnostic masters are as follows: *Simon Magus*, the contemporary of S. Peter; we hear of him as early as A.D. 34–5. He is usually considered the pioneer of Gnosticism. *Menander*, his disciple, carried on his teaching. *Cerinthus* was a contemporary of S. John towards the end of the first century. He seems to have differed in his teaching from the later Gnostic schools in his estimate of the Old Testament. He accepted the Law and the Prophets, but considered the Old Testament teaching as proceeding from a Being (the Demiurge) not only inferior to the Supreme, but even ignorant of Him. He did not apparently share in the Gnostic views of the inherent evil of Matter, as he taught the resurrection of the body. The only portion of the New Testament that he received was a mutilated gospel of S. Matthew.

Saturninus and *Basilides*, respectively the founders of Syrian and Alexandrian Gnosticism, were traditionally disciples of Menander, the pupil of Simon Magus. The school of Saturninus had comparatively little influence, and soon disappeared. The date usually assigned to him is *circa* A.D. 110–134.

Basilides, *circa* A.D. 135, taught the usual Gnostic doctrine of various emanations from the Supreme God, one of the lowest of whom was Creator of the world and was the God of the Old Testament. He professed to derive his system from S. Matthias and from one Glaucias, an interpreter of S. Peter. His teaching obtained a wide popularity.

Valentinus flourished about the middle of the second century, or a

* With the possible exception of the treatise Πίστις σοφία, regarded by some scholars as an original composition by Valentinus.

little earlier. His system we have already briefly dwelt upon. It was of a more elaborate and complex character than that of any other of the Gnostic teachers, and he counted among his adherents a more numerous following. His influence was probably largely owing to his brilliant pupil *Heracleon* (*circa* A.D. 170), whose commentaries, especially on S. John, were widely read. Clement of Alexandria, writing early in the second century, calls him the most famous of the Valentinian school, and gives us two extracts from his commentaries; while Origen has preserved no less than some forty-eight extracts, several of them being of considerable length.

It must ever be borne in mind that, with the one or possibly two exceptions mentioned above, all our knowledge of the once famous Gnostic teachers is derived from their bitter opponents, and from the fragments of Heracleon preserved to us by Origen. Some of these excerpts are undoubtedly of great power, and, as has been well said, "enable us to set their theology in a more worthy light than does the fantastic 'system' which Irenæus and others have given." But, as we have said above, their teaching can in no wise be looked upon as simply "heretical." *The religion which they taught was absolutely distinct*, and their speculations find little, if any, support whatever in the teaching of the gospels and epistles of the New Testament Canon.

Judaic Heresies.

There was one specially grave danger to which the early Church was exposed, and from which after some struggling she freed herself; but for a time the issue seemed doubtful. What was to be her attitude towards the Jewish people, from the heart of which she sprang? In other words, was Christianity to be a Jewish or a Universal Church? Were the Gentile nations who accepted Christianity to be admitted on somewhat hard and degrading terms into the Jewish fold; or, on the other hand, were the Jews to become Christian, acknowledging that the ancient doors of separation between them and the outside world were now broken down, and that all men were equally the people of God?

Very soon the great question was decided. By apostolic decree, by apostolic teaching everywhere, Gentile liberty and Gentile equality in all respects was insisted upon. It was decided that the rite of circumcision should not be imposed upon the Gentiles, and that Jewish laws and customs should not be pressed upon the foreign strangers flocking into the Church. Gradually without restriction Gentiles were admitted, faith in the name of Jesus and a pure devoted life being the

only requirements necessary before they received the baptismal seal of membership.

But not a few of the Jews were indignant at these concessions; indignant at the bare thought that they, the chosen people, were to be merged into one great fold, with Gentiles, whom they had so despised, for their comrades in the love of God. To many Jews the doctrine of the great "Pharisee" Christian Paul, "that in Christ was neither Jew nor Greek," was positively hateful.

No doubt the jealousy in the Christian synagogues was for a season the gravest danger the Church had to encounter. We shall never know how great was the peril. With perhaps the exception of the Thessalonian letters, written too early to be affected by this deadly struggle, all Paul's letters are more or less coloured by this internal strife. And we come upon burning references to it in S. John's "Revelation," when he flames out, for instance, twice over, in the letters to the Smyrna and Philadelphia churches, with such words as, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews but are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." Zeal for a "Law" which had done its work was the prime danger the first Christian missionaries had to encounter; it had to be overcome, for the question was one of life or death.

But a terrible and unlooked-for catastrophe happened, which largely cleared the way for the brave and generous preachers of the "open door" for the Gentiles. The awful close of the Jewish rebellion in A.D. 70, the ruin of Jerusalem which followed the burning of the Temple, the utter overthrow of the Jewish nation, well-nigh swept away the Jew from the scene. The cessation of the Temple services, the utter impossibility of any longer observing the Mosaic ordinances, save in a very attenuated manner, disarmed much of the fierce opposition; and the work was completed by the second frightful catastrophe to the Jews in Hadrian's reign (A.D. 135). Henceforth the work of the preachers of the "open door" for the Gentiles was easier. Effective Jewish opposition was in fact crushed out; the Christian communities were left to pursue their life virtually unhindered, unhampered by Jewish prejudices and Jewish passions.

After the ruin of Judaism in the final catastrophe of Hadrian's war in A.D. 135, there remained of the once fairly numerous class of the Christians of the Circumcision only a poor remnant who still clung to their cherished traditions; but these were neither numerous nor powerful enough to hinder the onward march of Christianity.

In the middle of the second century, not many years after the catastrophe of A.D. 135, Justin Martyr tells us that there were two

classes of (professedly Christian) Judaisers; those who, retaining the Mosaic law themselves, did not wish to impose it on their Gentile brethren, and those who demanded conformity in all Christians alike as a condition of communion and a means of salvation.

The first of these classes, generally known as *Nazarenes*, cannot be fairly classed as heretics, and were in no way a hindrance to the progress of Christianity. They were mostly orthodox in their creed, and held communion with Catholic Christians. The Nazarenes were few in number, and for the most part dwelt in remote districts in Palestine beyond the Jordan. Some scholars hold that the curious and ancient writing known as "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," variously dated by scholars from A.D. 100 to A.D. 150, was a Nazarene work, and, as far as it goes, fairly representative of their opinions. This "friendly" Judaising sect still existed as late as the close of the fourth century.

The *Ebionites*, however, were a much larger and more important body. They were to be found not only in Palestine and Syria, but in Rome and in other great cities where the dispersed Jews congregated. They were bitterly opposed to Gentile believers who refused to conform to the Mosaic law and customs. They were thoroughly unorthodox, too, in their opinions, holding our Lord to be a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, although they regarded Him as Messiah. They hated S. Paul, and, of course, rejected his writings. The famous pseudo-Clementine writings, known as "The Homilies" and "The Recognitions," issued from this hostile heretical sect. They were in active antagonism to the orthodox Christian Church about the second half of the second century in Rome, were mischievous, too, in other populous centres, and we hear of them as still a considerable body in the fourth century, after which they disappear from view. It has been suggested with great probability that they became gradually absorbed into Jewish communities, with whom they possessed greater affinities than with their so-called brethren of the Catholic Church.*

* The meaning of the appellation "Ebionite" is doubtful. Tertullian derives it from one Ebion, a master or teacher of the sect; but against this it is urged that no mention of such a person occurs in the references of Irenæus or Origen. A more probable derivation is from the Hebrew "ebion"—poor—from the *overty of their doctrines*, or more likely from the *poverty of their condition;* the Jewish communities from whom this sect would be largely recruited, especially after the dispersion in A.D. 135, being as a rule notorious for their poverty, at least as far as outward appearance could be trusted.

APPENDIX G.

EXTRACTS FROM LACTANTIUS AND EUSEBIUS.

SHOWING THE NATURE OF PERSECUTIONS ENDURED BY THE CHRISTIANS UNDER DIOCLETIAN, GALERIUS, AND MAXIMIN DAIA. A.D. 303–313.

Lactantius—De Mortibus Persecutorum.

"Presbyters and other officers of the Church were seized, without evidence by witnesses or confession, condemned, and together with their families led to execution. In burning alive no distinction of sex or age was regarded; and because of their great multitude, they were not burnt one after another, but a herd of them were encircled with the same fire: and servants, having millstones tied about their necks, were cast into the sea.

"Nor was the persecution less grievous on the rest of the people of God; for the judges, dispersed through all the temples, sought to compel everyone to sacrifice.

"The prisons were crowded. Tortures hitherto unheard of were invented; and lest justice should be inadvertently administered to a Christian, altars were placed in the courts of justice, hard by the tribunal, that every litigant might offer incense before his cause could be heard."—*Chapter* xv.

"He began this mode of execution by edicts against the Christians, commanding that after torture and condemnation they should be burnt at a slow fire. They were fixed to a stake, and first a moderate flame was applied to the soles of their feet, until the muscles, contracted by burning, were torn from their bones; then torches, lighted and put out again, were directed to all the members of their bodies, so that no part had any exemption."—*Chapter* xxi.

EUSEBIUS—*H. E.*, BOOK VIII.

"BUT of the rest, each encountered various kinds of torments. Here was one that was scourged with rods, there another tormented with the rack and excruciating scrapings, in which some at the time endured the most terrible death; others again passed through other torments in the struggle."—*Chapter* iii.

"Who can behold without amazement all this: their conflicts, after scourging, with bloody beasts of prey, when they were cast as food to leopards and bears, wild boars and bulls, goaded with fire, and branded with glowing iron? And in each of these, who can fail to admire the wonderful patience of these noble martyrs? At these scenes we have been present ourselves, when we also observed the Divine power of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ Himself, present, and effectually displayed in them; when for a long time the devouring wild beasts would not dare either to touch or approach the bodies of these pious men, but directed their violence against others that were anywhere stimulating them from without."—*Chapter* vii.

"But one cannot but admire those that suffered also in their native land, where thousands, both men, women and children, despising the present life for the sake of our Saviour's doctrine, submitted to death in various shapes.

"Some after being tortured with scrapings and the rack, and the most dreadful scourgings and other innumerable agonies, which one might shudder to hear, were finally committed to the flames; some plunged and drowned in the sea; others voluntarily offering their own heads to the executioners; others dying in the midst of their torments; some wasted away by famine, and others again fixed to the cross. Some, indeed, were executed as malefactors commonly were; others, more cruelly, were nailed with the head downwards, and kept alive until they were destroyed by starving on the cross itself."—*Chapter* viii.

"And what language would suffice to recount their virtues and their bravery under every trial?

"For as everyone had the liberty to abuse them, some beat them with clubs, some with rods, some with scourges, others again with thongs, others with ropes. And the sight of these torments was varied and multiplied, exhibiting excessive malignity. For some had their hands tied behind them and were suspended on the rack, and every limb was stretched on machines."—*Chapter* x.

"Some were mutilated by having their noses, ears, and hands cut off, and the rest of their limbs and parts of their bodies cut to pieces,

as was the case at Alexandria. Why should we revive the recollection of those at Antioch, who were roasted on grates of fire, so as not to kill them immediately, but to torture them with a lingering punishment?"—*Chapter* xii.

"The men bore fire, sword, and crucifixions, savage beasts, and the depths of the sea; the maiming of limbs and searing with red-hot iron, pricking and digging out the eyes, and the mutilations of the whole body. Also hunger, and mines and prisons; and, after all, they chose these sufferings for the sake of religion, rather than transfer to idols that veneration and worship which is due to God only. The females, also, no less than the men, were strengthened by the doctrine of the Divine Word, so that some endured the same trials as the men, and bore away the same prizes of excellence."—*Chapter* xiv.

"Some were scourged with innumerable strokes of the lash; others racked in their limbs, and galled in their sides with torturing instruments; some with intolerable fetters, by which the joints of their hands were dislocated. Nevertheless they bore the event, as regulated by the secret determinations of God."—*Martyrs of Palestine, Chapter* i.

"When the storm had incessantly raged against us into the sixth year of the persecution, there had been before this a vast number of confessors of true religion in what is called the porphyry quarry, from the name of the stone which is found in the Thebais. Of these one hundred, wanting three, men, women, and young infants, were sent to the governor of Palestine, who, for confessing the Supreme God and Christ, had the ankles and sinews of their left legs seared off with a red-hot iron. Besides this, they had their right eyes first cut out, together with the lids and pupils, and then seared with red-hot irons, so as to destroy the eyes to the very roots."—*Martyrs of Palestine, Chapter* viii.

"Thus, then, the thirty-nine, at the command of the most execrable Maximin, were beheaded in one day. And these were the martyrdoms exhibited in Palestine in the space of eight years, and such was the persecution in our day. It began, indeed, with the demolition of the churches, and grew to a great height during the insurrections from time to time under the rulers. In these, many and various were the contests of the noble wrestlers in the cause of piety, who presented an innumerable multitude of martyrs through the whole province, from Libya, and through all Egypt, Syria, and those of the east, round as far as those of the region of Illyricum."—*Martyrs of Palestine, Chapter* xiii.

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